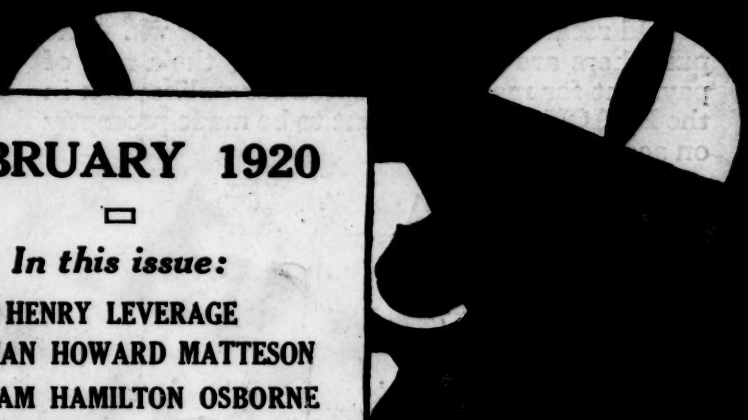
In This Issue – Conditions of the $5000.00 Short Story Contest

The Black Cat

ESTABLISHED 1895



FEBRUARY 1920

In this issue:

HENRY LEVERAGE
HERMAN HOWARD MATTESON
WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE
IDA M. EVANS
JAMES FRANCIS DWYER
ELLIS PARKER BUTLER
WILLIAM DUDLEY PELLEY
GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND
and stories by 10 others

20 CENTS

THE BLACK CAT MAGAZINE, INC., *Publishers*
229 WEST 28TH STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.

Article 6

The conditions of THE BLACK CAT $5,000.00 Prize Story Contest are fully set forth in the announcement pages of this number. See Pages 137-140.

The publishers wish particularly to call the attention of writers to Article 6 of the conditions, which provides for the payment at regular rates for all stories submitted in the contest that are found to be acceptable for publication, whether they win prizes or not. All stories marked "Prize Contest" (see conditions) will be considered for immediate or for future publication, as well as for the competition.

In view of the present high cost of living, the new publishers recognize the fact that writers should receive better prices for their work. The publishers are therefore increasing their rate of payment for material accepted for publication in the BLACK CAT, payment to be made promptly on acceptance.

The Black Cat

For twenty-five years the only magazine that has devoted itself exclusively to the advancement of short-story writing.

The Black Cat

Established 1895

VOL. XXV No. 4 FEBRUARY 1920 20c a COPY $2.00 a YEAR

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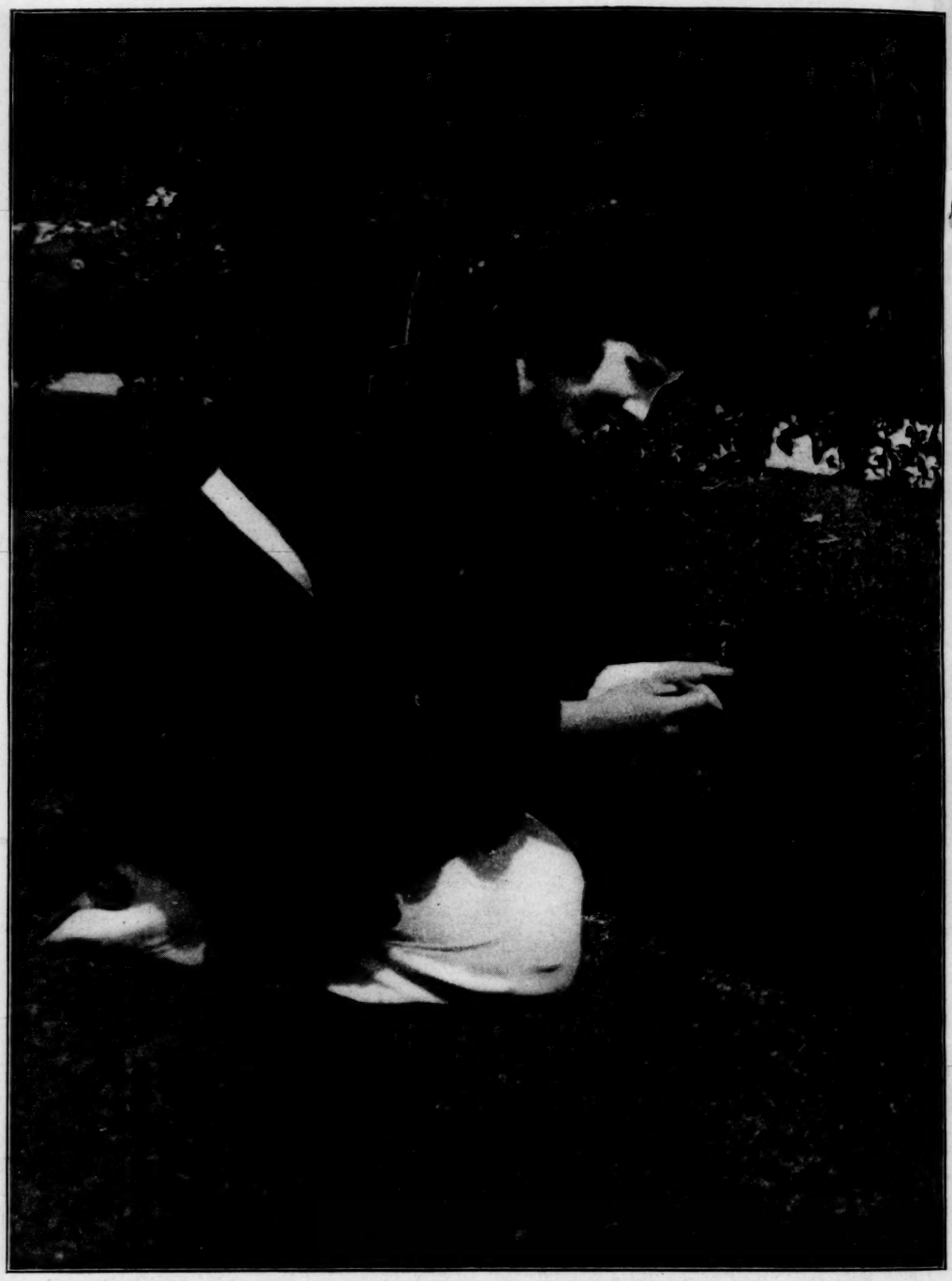


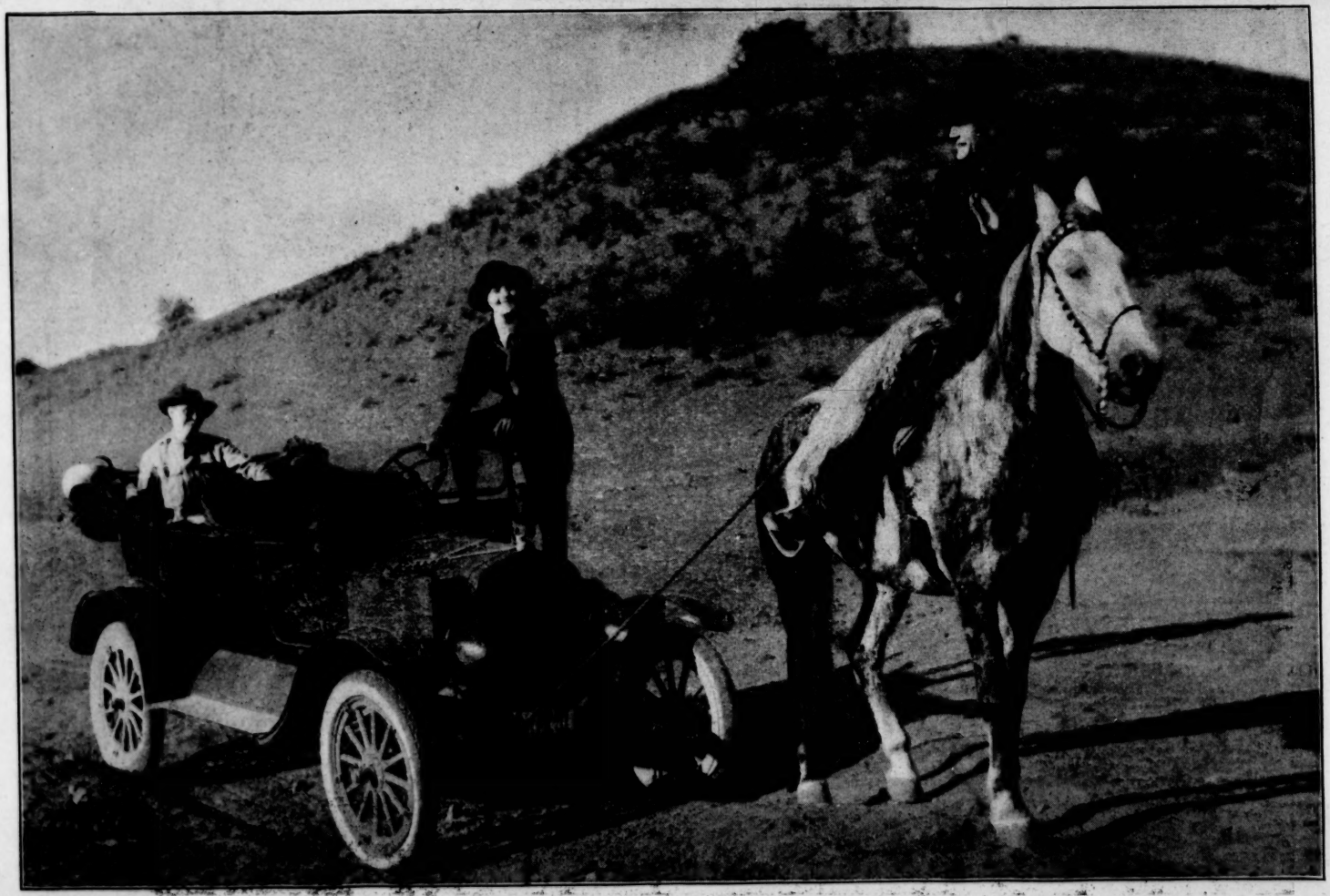
Shirley Mason trains bear-cubs, and isn't afraid of any kind of animal, in an intimate, fascinating study and story of real animal life entitled "Her Elephant Man," a surprise release coming soon.

Viola Dana, always superb in a big moment, from the beautiful artistic Japanese story, "The Willow Tree," that will soon delight t housands.

William Russell, the screen's greatest rough-and-tumble fighting hero, lights a match to see who he has downed in "The Lincoln Highwayman," a whirlwind thriller soon to be seen.

Marion Davies defies the villain in "The Cinema Murder"—soon to be shown and said to be the exquisite Marion's greatest picture.

Lillian Gish trying to save herself by attracting attention from the street. A big moment in D. W. Griffith's latest release, "The Greatest Question."



Buck Jones, a real two-gun daredevil, genuine cow puncher, who has never refused a director's dare, has a tame moment only once in a while in "The Square Shooter," a release that will soon make thousands sit up.

Action! Action! Action! that is the winning feature of the successful modern screen comedy. Chester Conklin in action in "Labor Turns to High Life," one of the Sunshine Comedies series about to be released.

THE MOLE

By HENRY LEVERAGE

DOWN on Sanford Street, near a subway kiosk, dwelt the Mole—otherwise Abe Dolger — gangster, gunman, cheap badman.

Not bad in the Western sense of stand-up in fair fight with rod, or gat or gun. The Mole was a product of mob-fighting where it took ten gangsters to beat up one push-cart peddler or twenty to protect a stuss house.

The Mole's one room in the basement of a tenement was dark and secure from prying eyes. It was littered with empty bottles, old newspapers and cigarette stubs. The cot sagged in the middle where Abe Dolger sat fingering a blued-steel automatic of .38 calibre.

Craftily the Mole considered his plan for removing from this earth Kid Lewis, leader of a rival gang. Kid Lewis had gone too far. The matter had to be settled once for all. The .38 was a convincing weapon of its kind, although a trifle heavy for a shriveled-soul gangster of the Mole's type.

Gangster was written on the Mole's features. He was a pale youth, weak-chinned, pop-eyed, slightly-built and alertly-nervous. The City had spawned him in one of its dark places—away from sun and air and ozone.

The quarrel between the Mole and Kid Lewis was of long standing. The Kid was the leader of the Sanford Street Gang. The Mole was affiliated with the Hudson Busters—a pocket-picking, keister-lifting fraternity of yellow-livered cowards.

Aeons ago the Kid's ancestors had become pugnacious. The stone age or cave period endowed the Mole with a propensity for seeking cover. In his fight with the Kid that gangster had driven him into the subway and hurled down the steps part of a news-stand and an ash barrel by way of finishing up the affair.

The Mole emerged from the ashes and papers vowing vengeance. The plan for this revenge came slowly. It took all of four trips on subway trains from the Battery to One Hundred and Sixteenth Street before the Kid's death warrant was written. Beyond a general idea the Mole did not go. He left the rest to chance.

Chance, that large factor, caused him to don a dark overcoat, cram the .38, fully loaded, into a side pocket, turn out the gas and leave his one room at exactly six o'clock by a factory whistle in the neighborhood.

He hesitated in the hallway of the tenement and peered at the throng of workers pouring into the subway kiosk, but ten feet away from the tenement steps.

The fear of open places weighed heavily upon the Mole's mind. He had always avoided sunlight, starlight or wide sweeps where the hounds of the law could leap upon him before he could gain the security of the underground passages.

Crimm and Cassady, of the pickpocket squad, were just as likely as not to be lurking outside the tenement. The Mole had to be careful in the little matter of a .38 automatic. Carrying concealed weapons would call, in his case, for a prison term measured by years.

Twice the Mole started to leave the shelter of the tenement doorway. Each time he drew back. Shadowy forms, near a corner drug store, might be Kid Lewis's lieutenants or lurking detectives.

Finally he pulled his disappearing chin into the soiled velvet collar of his overcoat, hunched his shoulders, glanced apprehensively at the sky and street and sidewalks, and darted, like a gopher, for the subway.

He breathed freely when he reached the station platform, after dropping a ticket into the chopper's box. He glided to the end of the concrete walk, crouched between a chewing-gum machine and a tool box, started up and down the tracks, then waited for a local train which would take him north.

Kid Lewis would be in Harlem. The Mole boarded the train at the end car, slouched behind a wide-spread newspaper, and pretended to read. He watched the passengers with his pop eyes darting suspiciously.

Alighting in Harlem, and working through a crowd in front of the subway kiosk, he again felt the gripping fear of the open places. The hall, wherein Kid Lewis had advertised a subscription dance, was across the street from the kiosk.

The Mole got over the cobbles somehow and entered the hall. He turned to the right, climbed a dark flight of steps, entered an empty box and peered over the railing. Kid Lewis, in a soiled white shirt and Tuxedo coat, was arranging chairs around tiny iron tables.

Satisfied with his inspection, the Mole went downstairs and darted through the traffic and into the subway kiosk. He spent the rest of the evening planning an altogether suitable finish for the gangster.

Kid Lewis and his friends would go down town soon after the subscription dance. They would undoubtedly take a subway train from the Harlem station nearest the dance hall.

The Mole timed himself so as to have an hour to wait. He changed trains at Brooklyn Bridge, went up town, got off one station above the Harlem stop and, after a furtive glance at the dark sky above the kiosk, darted across the street and entered the downtown stairway where he rode one station and sprang to the concrete walk.

He had marked a nick in the wall at the extreme southern end of the platform. It was an outlet box for electric feeders. There was room behind the great snakelike conduits for a man to crouch without being seen. The lights were pale. The roar of the fast-moving trains would drown the sound of a revolver shot.

Patiently, for more than an hour, the Mole waited, with his pop eyes fixed on the few passengers who descended the steps and walked the long concrete platform.

Trains went by like huge bobbins. Once a trackwalker came into view. He inspected the third rail, swung a lantern, and disappeared around a curve.

The Mole's patience was fast ebbing when Kid Lewis and two of his lieutenants came down the steps, purchased tickets, and strolled past the ticket chopper.

The Kid was a fair mark from the Mole's position. There could be no missing his soiled white shirt-front or pasty face. The Mole waited and rested the revolver upon a bend of a lead conduit. He watched for the lights of the next train.

The train came into sight. The brakes went on. The motorman stopped directly opposite the Mole's cramped position.

The Mole saw Kid Lewis on the platform between two cars. The gangster's lieutenants followed their leader. The train started, moved an inch, surged, then forged ahead.

Slowly the windows passed before the Mole's straining eyes. He wondered if

a bullet would be deflected by the glass. He aimed, grasped the .38 with both hands, waited, moved the barrel and sighted it between Kid Lewis's chin and bulging shirt.

The roar and jerk when the Mole pulled the trigger was followed by falling glass, a shout, and a fog of acrid fumes that mixed with the dust of the subway.

Having taken care of Kid Lewis, the Mole made haste to pocket the revolver, and, before the train had rounded the curve, try for the stairway that led to the street kiosk.

He hated the thought of emerging from security to an open place. He took one step, saw the guard at the ticket chopper pointing excitedly in his direction, and sprang to the track, where, crouching and worming beneath the platform, he went under the guard and crawled to the up-town end of the platform.

This ruse had been calculated upon in case of trouble from the ticket seller or guard. The Mole heard voices above him. Running feet sounded. A police whistle shrilled through the tunnel. The train stopped somewhere beyond the bend. The semaphores flashed red all the way up the subway.

Secure in the half-light and dust of the great concreted passage, the Mole took his time before emerging from under the platform and crawling north to the next station. He considered the matter of keeping the revolver. He drew it out, then replaced it in his pocket. There was little danger of being captured so long as he remained below ground.

Deep in the soul of the Mole came a feeling of security. He looked up and saw the arching concrete of the subway. Each side of the vast tunnel was composed of stones and dark niches into which it would be easy to dodge.

He started crawling between a third rail and the stones. Now and then he hesitated, drew his head from out of his collar—like a turtle taking a view around—then went on, moving through the half-lighted passage toward the next station.

A train roared northward on the right-hand track. The Mole waited and coughed from the unpalatable dust. He wormed on and, after passing two red-set semaphores, dodged agilely into a conduit when a section-hand came around a bend waving a lantern.

It was evident that the alarm caused by Kid Lewis's murder had spread from one end of the subway to the other. The Mole didn't care. He felt the security of the dark. He loved the near touch of dirt and stones. There was no chance of being captured by Crimm and Cassady, or any others of the pickpocket squad, so long as he remained below ground.

This feeling of safety was a primate one with the Mole. It was deeper than life. It went back to the cave days when his ape ancestors or snake forebears ducked for the nearest fissure in the rocks at the approach of danger.

Opposing this feeling of security was the innate knowledge that the open places, such as streets and parks, were to be avoided. The Mole had never picked a pocket or robbed a man except under cover.

The ramifications of the Grand Central Station, the hotels on Forty-second Street and the subway loops were ideal mazes wherein to lose his hated enemies, the police.

He reasoned in his crafty brain that a doubling back on his tracks was best calculated to throw off pursuit. The ticket chopper at the Harlem station had seen him go south. The detectives had by this time searched the subway between the two stations in a southerly direction. They most certainly would discover the open place under the platform and conclude that the escape had been effected by fleeing north.

The Mole reached the station above the one where he had shot Kid Lewis, waited, peered from behind a heavy iron post, then climbed upon the platform when a train came in view. He mingled with a crowd of merrymakers, squeezed between two youths, and went aboard the last subway car. The train started.

There was a newspaper on the next seat to the Mole. He secured it, spread it wide and pretended to be deeply interested in the sporting page. The train stopped at the platform where detectives and police were gathered about the ticket chopper and a subway guard. The train went on. The Mole had safely passed the greatest point of danger.

He rode to the station nearest his tenement room. He climbed the stairs and peered through the gloom toward the doorway. He ducked back. A husky figure, crouched at the railing of the tenement, was most certainly a detective. The word had gotten out that there was only one man in the city vitally interested in slaying Kid Lewis.

A shout echoed through the almost deserted street. A second detective had seen the peering face and black-garbed figure lurking in the subway kiosk. The Mole ducked down the stairs, leaped past the ticket-chopper and sprang for the tracks. He dodged and twisted in an attempt to escape northward. He reached a branch of the subway where one set of tracks went under the East River, while the other set continued up town.

A train roared by him and came to a stop. The Mole climbed on to the coupling of the rear car. He rode a station hanging by one leg and an arm. He dropped off, scurried through a wilderness of posts and upturned earth, and threw himself down between two piles of steel ties. He was safe from pursuit. The arch of concrete over his head gave him the feeling of security.

He thought of a number of plans to defeat Crimm and Cassady. One idea struck him as feasible, but dangerous. He knew a subway platform upon which were windows looking into the basement of a department store. Oftentimes these windows were filled with men's suits and overcoats.

There was another place at Grand Central Station where an entrance could be forced into a store. The store was filled with army goods. The Mole felt the edge of his black overcoat and took off his cap. He eyed it in the gloom of the subway. Both articles had been seen by the ticket chopper and the detectives watching the tenement. His description was known. There was danger on every hand.

The Mole abandoned the idea of robbing the two stores and decided on a better one. He crawled over the dirt, hid behind piles of gravel and ties, and darted suddenly toward a tool box standing by a blacksmith's forge. In this box, which was unlocked, were deposited overalls and black hats to the number of three or four. They belonged to the tracklayers and workmen.

Transferring the .38 to his hip pocket, the Mole made a hasty change of costume and left behind his overcoat and cap. He looked the part of a track-walker or overtime worker. He picked up a lantern and boldly started walking along the tracks.

All might have gone well had the Mole not been confronted by a foreman overseeing a gang of workmen where a water-pipe had burst beneath the roadbed.

"Where do you belong?" asked the foreman aggressively.

The Mole swung the lantern, dashed it into the astonished man's face, and ran over the tracks. He got away after a mile chase. The breath was out of him when he crawled into a conduit opening and lay down to think matters over.

As before, the feeling came to him that he was safe under ground. He lay

on his back, sneezed once from the dust, and smiled through his grimy lips. Cassady and Crimm were foiled completely. They, no doubt, were throwing a dragnet at every subway station.

The maze of underground passages was a thing that would foil the best of detectives. The Mole had once considered enlarging an opening he had found near a downtown station, fitting it with a moving stone for a door, and living in peace and security.

He thought of this place, shook his head, and began examining the conduit in which he lay. It extended back through solid rock. Lead cables lined one side. Suddenly it turned upward. The Mole struck a match and looked toward the top. He saw, before the match died to an ember in his fingers, a circular opening and a few bright stars.

Shivering, he went back to the subway. He feared that one view of the outside. Detectives and patrolmen walked the paved streets. The alarm had spread over the city. He was wanted for the murder of Kid Lewis, and the hounds of the law were sniffing at all likely places.

Just before dawn the Mole crawled from the conduit opening and dropped to the subway tracks. A chilling breeze drove him out of his position of security. The open manhole offered danger from above.

He shivered, stretched his limbs and neck, and started crawling toward the far-off lights of a station platform. Twice he dodged out of sight when track-walkers came along. He reached the end of the platform, crouched and waited for a train that was roaring somewhere behind him.

It was his intention to climb aboard the train, hide in the rear vestibule, and go to Brooklyn, where he could find a labyrinth of new subway construction which would offer a week's shelter underground.

The idea of slipping beneath water and evading the detectives was soul-satisfying to the Mole. He climbed upon the coupling knuckle, of the train, when it stopped, and crawled into the vestibule. There was a guard between two cars. An early-morning worker sat on a seat near this guard.

Suddenly the train started and kept going. It passed station after station at high speed. The Mole rose and pressed his face to the vestibule window. He had made an error—two errors, in fact. The train was bound for the north. It was hurrying to the terminal at Van Courtland Park in order to meet the morning rush of suburbanites.

Daxed through the error of losing his sense of direction, the Mole remained at the window too long. The train slowed slightly near a long, brightly-lighted platform. A policeman, in uniform, touched a burly man on the arm. The Mole saw Calvin Crimm turn and stare. Recognition flashed between the fugitive and the detective.

One desire gripped the Mole's soul when Crimm's face faded. He must get off the fast-flying train. Already the telephone wires were busy. Already guards and ticket choppers had been notified to intercept him.

He crawled to the coupler and gripped a chain with both hands. The dust and roar of the swift passage filled his ears. He wanted to drop before the train emerged from the subway and came above ground on an elevated structure. He feared the open places and the light.

A sudden flash blinded his eyes. The train emerged from the tunnel. It rolled to a grinding stop at a station where detectives and police were waiting. The signal had been set to stop.

Dropping across the ties, the Mole rose, staggered in a small circle, got his bearings, blinked at the light of day and commenced running toward the opening in the ground from which the train had emerged.

He heard a shout behind him. He

redoubled his speed. He stretched his trembling legs over three ties at each stride. The opening became larger. In it he saw gloom and security. Voices sounded below the elevated structure. People pointed upward. A police whistle shrilled.

The desire for life was strong within the Mole. He drew out his revolver and cocked it. The distance to the subway opening was not more than half a block. Stone abutments ran on either side of him. The ties were cemented together. He leaped, brandished his .38, and dived for the opening. He dropped on hands and knees and crept between the tracks. The accusing daylight followed him. He rose and ran.

Shielding his eyes with one arm, he turned and looked back. Two policemen were coming along the track. The Mole fired wildly at them. He threw away the empty weapon, wheeled, and started feeling his way in the gloom. A place showed where there was security—an opening into a sewer or a water-drain to the street.

He had almost reached it when a train stopped on the northbound track and Crimm leaped past the motorman. The detective saw the Mole's intention. He whipped out a police-regulation revolver.

"Get them up, you!" he shouted.

The Mole flung himself down and crawled for the drain-pipe. His fingers were touching the edge of the stone when Crimm pounced upon him. The Central-Office man brought the butt of the heavy revolver slicing across the Mole's head.

"You're wanted," he grunted when he snapped on the handcuffs. "Wanted for the killing of Kid Lewis. You would have gotten away if you had stayed where you belong—underground!"

OLD DOC

By HERMAN HOWARD MATTESON

UDGING from the crayon portraits, attic, the sitting- which, in the order of their subject's abdication, hung, respectively, in the room, and above the door of the mistress's bed chamber, the three husbands of Mrs. Loreny Busby had been, without exception, meek, unresisting men. It is something, after having espoused three lawful husbands, to retain intact a snug, original fortune; it is more to have added to that original pile the certain tithes and perquisites which had been exacted as the price of ransom from the matrimonial detention camp. Mrs. Busby was rich.

She was engaged in making apple turn-overs when there came a knock at the kitchen door. "Come in. Why, it's Mrs. Lowther. Set right down. There's a chair."

Mrs. Lowther seated herself, crossed her knees, draped her skirts so as to hide the men's rubbers which she was wearing upon her feet.

"Old Doc finally has hit it," announced Mrs. Lowther importantly.

"Go on," retorted Mrs. Busby ambiguously and incredulously. "I bet he hain't. Don't tell me. Hain't I seen twenty of Old Doc's schemes go glimmering. Hadn't I ought to know? Twelve hundred of my money went into that dratted clam cannin' scheme of hissen. Why, if every blessed clam that Old Doc canned had been a hippopotamus they couldn't have et up my money faster. Him hit it! Don't tell me."

"I tell you he has," returned Mrs. Lowther stoutly. "I just come from the post office. He——"

"Him hit it? Never. Failure, downright failure is much a part of Old Doc as the blood in his veins. And what else can you expect, him a grown man, taking pride in knowing the dictionarial names of star fish, and pennywinkles, and such rot. Look at Old Doc's lobster farm. Good-bye. A thousand dollars of real money—Jim Dunning's. Failure is Old Doc's first, middle and last name."

Mrs. Lowther squirmed uneasily. "Better hearted man than Old Doc never lived," she declared. "He hain't a money maker. Maybe that's why he's so human. If a body's sick, Old Doc is the first to lay hand on your gate. There hain't ary a corpse ever originated on this island that Old Doc hain't set up with. A failure—"

"There was that patent shrimp lure of hissen," interrupted Mrs. Busby. There wasn't never a shrimp come within four mile of it. His fresh air and ozone generator— Just look. It didn't even cure his own asthmy. Now it's his out-door bathin'. I tell you, a man as old as him, prancin' around in nightgown and slippers—it hain't decent. The law ought to take him and his movable bath tub, why—why—"

A spot of bellicose red showed upon the cheek of Mrs. Lowther. "I've saw Old Doc in his bathin' rig," she admitted. "It buttons close up around his neck, and it hangs clean to his heels. It's a sight decenter than that postage stamp bathing suit your niece was

wearin' here to the beach last summer." Mrs. Lowther was warming up. She arose hastily, took a swift turn across the floor. "Anyway, Old Doc hain't a failure. Look at his vacuum salmon canner. No, he didn't get any money out of it; they badgered him out of his rights. But he's saved many a poor soul from dyin' of tin blood-poison. Just because he don't cash every breath —like some—into money— But he's going to get his reward. It looks like he'd already got it. I, for one, glory in his success."

"Success!" exclaimed Mrs. Busby, but with lessening sarcasm. "Oh, I know what he's been working on. He figures this kelp sea-weed is full of potash and iodine, and he can extract it out and sell it, and get rich. Pooh!"

"Pooh," repeated Mrs. Lowther airily. "You'll 'pooh' when you hear the news. I know you, Loreny Busby. When you hear— Say, I'd hate to be an innocent, prattlin' child in the path between here and Doc's when you do hear. Such will be your rush, Loreny Busby, to get in on Doc's luck, that you'd tromp a child ilke one of them juggernuts."

Mrs. Lowther began to tack toward the rear door, but was brought about suddenly by a firm hand plucking her sleeve. "Well, tell a body, if the news is so wonderful."

Mrs. Lowther shook herself free, opened the door. "Agent for a drug firm was to see Old Doc this morning. He tested Doc's dope. He bought a hundred pound of potash—all Doc had —and a gallon of iodine, and he said he'd buy all the stuff Old Doc could make. What you got an idea Doc got for that jug of iodine? He got forty dollars for it. There."

Mrs. Lowther turned and fled triumphantly down the path. Mrs. Busby opened the oven door. The apple turnovers were done to a perfect, luscious brown. She shoveled one onto a plate, covered it with a napkin, flung her shawl about her shoulders, and rushed down the path toward the village.

Jim Dunning had a nose that looked as if it might open up any instant and verify the suspicion that it was, after all, a beak and not a nose. At the moment, this proboscis of Dunning's was hovering in close proximity to the ear of Old Doc as if it rather premeditated taking a nip at that defenseless organ. Old Doc, his eyes shining benevolently through his thick-lensed glasses, was rubbing his hand and exclaiming, "Good —excellent—highly satisfactory."

The creak of the opening door almost drowned the sound of Mrs. Busby's knock. She advanced into the center of the room, impaled Dunning with a glare of suspicion, then, in a manner distrait, held forth the apple turn-over as if to say, "Here, Doc, is something I picked up in the yard; does it belong to you?"

Old Doc waved a pudgy hand in the direction of the kitchen table. Mrs. Busby planked down the turn-over, seized one of the straight-backed kitchen chairs, seated herself upon it, then hitched forward, driving her knees like a wedge between the knees of Old Doc and Jim Dunning.

"I know what you're talking about, Jim Dunning; I'm in on it. My clam money is just as good as your lobster money."

There were no degrees to Mr. Dunning's mirth. He was a man of one grin. Habit had accordion plaited his countenance. Whenever it seemed expedient to him to stimulate geniality, he released the cerebral stop labeled "smile." The result was unvarying. There was a preliminary, painful working of the jaw muscles followed by a subcutaneous disturbance which erupted the folds of leathern skin into ridges, or depressed it into yawning, wrinkled chasms. Then the grin would snap itself off suddenly like a nickel-in-the-slot phonograph that had played its tune.

Mrs. Busby regarded Dunning malevolently. "Don't turn that chesicat grin on me, Jim Dunning. Now, Doc, I'm an older, far truer friend of yourn than Jim Dunning ever dared to be. What's doing? How much, do you figure, this here kelp business can be made to pay a day?"

In the flush of the long-delayed triumph that now seemed his, Doc forgot, and forgave, the slights, the petty, sordid persecutions, the merciless and everlasting houndings to which both Dunning and Mrs. Busby had subjected him.

"My friends," said Old Doc, beaming upon his callers, "this is gratifying, most gratifying. You have come, both of you, to offer, I suspect, financial aid for my plans. Good of you. It will cost but a trifle to erect and build the plant. The profits, reducing ten tons of kelp a day, will be about four hundred dollars a day, ample for three of us. The money, your respective shares, you will, of course, disburse as you may severally see fit. As for me, it will enable me to go forward on several projects which, ah, which— My sister Ella's crippled boy—"

"What'll it cost, building, machinery, all we need?"

"Why, Dunning, approximately two thousand dollars. The kelp we can buy—"

"Buy kelp!" exclaimed Mrs. Busby in tones of horror, "sea-weed kelp that's common as sand fleas? We'll buy no kelp; we'll help ourselves. What if it does grow on somebody else's tide flats. It hain't no good to 'em unless they've got our process."

"What is the process, Doc?" Mr. Dunning was reminded to inquire.

Who would have thought that Doc, simple, trusting soul, could have developed such sudden cunning. Mrs. Busby gave the old man a look of severe disapprobation as he hesitated, then said, "All in good time, I will explain the process. But not now."

Dunning had produced a piece of paper and a stub of a pencil. Shortly thereon, there appeared tentative plans for the formation of the Kelp Products Company, to be capitalized for three thousand dollars, or thirty shares of one hundred dollars each, fully paid.

"You're putting in the process for your share, Doc," explained Dunning. "I and Mrs. Busby will put up a thousand each, cash. You're to show the process to us, reduce it to writing, one copy only. That process paper hain't ever to be took out of the office safe unless two of the three stockholders is present. You agree never to show the process to any outsider, or ever make the stuff except in our plant. I'll make the company a present of a safe to keep the paper in."

"A safe," snorted Mrs. Busby. "You mean that coffee canister with a padlock? You call that a safe?"

"I'll have Lawyer Bogardus draw up the papers," continued Dunning, ignoring Mrs. Busby's aspersion. "You say, Doc, we'll clear four hundred a day?"

"Absolutely." Old Doc's head held itself erect between the stooped shoulders. In his eyes was the far-away expression of one who looks over and beyond the shards of defeat to the pleasant, green hills of the promised land. "Four hundred dollars a day. My process is sure—perfect. The market for our products is as stable as for wheat."

Dunning aroused himself finally from a thoughtful mood. "It's more a matter of form, Doc, than anything else," said he, "and at a third of four hundred dollars a day won't take you no time at all."

Old Doc glanced up expectantly. Dunning, hemming and hawing, continued. "To be business like, Doc, you'd ought to sign over your corporation shares to I and Mrs. Busby as security for that lobster and clam money. Just as soon as it's paid, why, we release your stock."

Mrs. Busby was instantly a-flutter. "That would be the practical way, Doc; honest it would. You do as Jim says. He's a business man, and you hain't."

Old Doc's face fell. Rather rudely, he had been jolted out of a pleasant meditation. But he smiled bravely, rubbed his hands. "Anything, my friends; whatever is right."

Old Doc, his face aglow, was in the act of decanting the first distillation converted in the new factory. Holding aloft a beaker, as if it were a rarest vintage and he about to toast the charms of his mistress, he said, "Iodine, pure iodine. The process is a success, our equipment perfect. Let us felicitate one another, my friends. We shall be rich, all of us, far beyond the dreams of avarice."

Jim Dunning, borrowing inspiration from the picture of the venerable chemist depicted upon the label of a certain brand of whiskey which, twice or thrice a week he purchased for medicinal purposes only, had rigged himself out in a night cap and bib apron. Mrs. Busby, to signalize the formality and importance of the occasion, had put on a pair of black silk mits. Dunning, wise, predatory bird, clutched the formula sheet in his skinny claws like prey recently captured.

"You're a smart chemical, Doc," bestowed Mrs. Busby. "They hain't a doubt of it. But I'd like to know if I hain't deserving of credit. Look at that chimney. There I saved the company twenty dollars. As long as the factory and the office is only five foot apart, one chimney does for both. Chemical brains is fine, but business brains is needed likewise."

Something appeared all at once to be troubling Dunning, the alchemist. Looking as miserable as if he were about to moult, he was running his beak back and forth across the formula sheet. As Old Doc dumped a basket full of dried kelp into the retort, Dunning wigwagged the distress signal to Mrs. Busby. Silently, portentiously, he pointed to the formula sheet. "What's them mean?" he demanded. "H2 SO4 —— HCl—"

"Lawsee, I don't know."

A startled look swept over Mrs. Busby's blowsy countenance. "We've been jobbed," she shrilled. "Them's mystical symbols that nobody knows what is but Doc. This formula paper hain't no more good to us than a Chinese laundry list."

Mrs. Busby snatched the paper from Dunning's grasp, and, in perfect formation, marched across the floor. "Doc, you're purty slick, but you can't crowd none of that over on Loreny Busby. What's them signs mean? You run a batch of stuff through, do you hear, and as you run, you change that witch writin' into United States."

Old Doc smiled amiably. "H2 SO4 means sulphuric acid, HCl means hydrochloric acid. That's all."

Mrs. Busby breathed with relief. Dunning batted his eyes owlishly, advising the lady partner that he, for one, had at no time been either distressed or deceived.

"Now, Doc, you run through a batch while I and Mrs. Busby gets the hang of it."

Half a dozen batches Old Doc ran through, but his partners were able to follow not at all save by an unremitting scrutiny of the formula sheet. "With that formula sheet," whispered Mrs. Busby to Dunning, "we're all right. If it's lost—we're ruined."

Dunning, giving way to his zeal for chemical investigation, stuck his finger into a beaker of concentrated hydrochloric acid. In response to his squawk of pain, Old Doc ran to his succor with the ammonia bottle.

"My sakes!" exclaimed Mrs. Busby, as she contemplated the finger of Mr. Dunning, now turned a rich, golden brown, "them must be powerful stuff."

"Very," confirmed Old Doc. "There's nitric acid, for example. In a certain combination with glycerin—boom." Old Doc waved the factory and its environs off into nothingness.

"You could blow the whole village of Doby offen the island, couldn't you, Doc?" interrogated Mrs. Bsuby, wide-eyed with admiring fear. "But don't do it, Doc; don't do it."

Doc smiled reassuringly as he consulted his dollar watch. "Six o'clock. Let us call it a day."

Dunning, hanging his night cap and apron upon a hook, thrust the formula sheet into his pocket. Mrs. Busby removed her black, silk mits, and the precious twain preceded Old Doc, who paused to lock the factory door. Standing in the narrow space which separated the factory from the office, Dunning and Mrs. Busby exchanged glances. The former motioned to Old Doc to unlock the office. "Let's resolve ourselves into a business session before you go, Doc," said Dunning.

Dunning began to follow with his gaze a fly crawling upon the office ceiling. "I've had quite a number of folks pesterin' me, Doc," said Dunning, "and so has Mrs. Busby. So, in consequence, I and Mrs. Busby, bein' the business brains of the corporation, have took up the matter one with the other."

Mrs. Busby nodded vigorously. "Just so, Doc."

"Not being a business man, Doc," continued Dunning, "you can't understand how awful important credit is. Credit is the very life blood, bones and, and—innards of business. Well, we're starting bad. Parties too numerous to mention is beginning to pester us, Doc, about what you owe."

"That's right," confirmed Mrs. Busby, "I've been approached, and hectored."

"My friends," returned Doc humbly, "why should my creditors—"

"As a corporation, Doc," interrupted Dunning, who, in his metaphors evinced a preference for the sanguinary and anatomical, "as a corporation we're bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh. We're one and inseparable, time without end; your country is our country."

"Why, Dunning," protested Doc, "I have always understood that one of the advantages of a corporation was that it had no responsibility for its stockholders' debts."

"Morally, Doc, I mean morally. At any rate, we've been pestered, I and Mrs. Busby."

"You suggest—what?"

Dunning gulped with relief. Now the question was before the house. "Why, I and Mrs. Busby figures that you ought to kind of retire out of the company till your bills is paid."

The mild, blue eyes of Old Doc flashed. But it was no more than a flash. He dropped his gaze to the floor. He looked an old man, broken, humble, obedient.

"Don't get rambunctious, Doc. Remember I and Mrs. Busby has got the transfer of your stock. Besides, just to save your credit, I bought up the claim held against you by the Western Hardware Company for them galvanized trays you bought and never paid for for the lobster farm."

"And I," added Mrs. Busby, "for reasons similar, went and bought the claim of the American Gear Works for that clam canning machine."

"Then, my friends," said Old Doc, chirking up hopefully, "with those hostile claims in your possession, you will not be annoyed further. I will repay them, out of my share of the profits."

"But we hain't got the claims, all of 'em," protested Dunning. "No; till everything is shipshape, you—you better—"

"What?" demanded Doc.

Mrs. Busby leaned over carelessly and flicked the office and factory keys from Doc's fingers. "It's better, Doc," said

she, "to kind of circulate the report around that, for the time being, you're out of the Kelp Company. When everything is paid up, why then, you—we—"

Old Doc's head bobbed once or twice, settled upon his breast. His lips opened dryly as if, hooked, gaffed and landed, he lay expiring in slow agony in the captor's reel.

"I'm out—thrown out. It's my invention, my discovery that I have worked over, dreamed over, yes, prayed over for twenty ears. Now I'm out."

Dunning arose briskly as from a task well done. Whistling a dolorous air, he unlocked the coffee canister safe, and thrust the formula sheet within. Mrs. Busby arose stiffly, smoothed her skirts.

"It's just temporary, Doc," cheered Mr. Dunning, bestowing a sly wink upon the lady partner, "just temporary."

Old Doc, his head bent, walked slowly to his cabin. That night, the first omission for months, he forbore repairing to the spring in the grove with his movable bath tub. Instead, he sat long before the fire absently stroking the willing back of his big, white cat, Archimedes.

To THE old man keeping to the lonely retirement of his cabin, the news, sped by the indefatigible tongue of Mrs. Busby, that he had retired from the Kelp Company returned in many guises. Added information was that one Ben Drisko, a protege and moral replica of Dunning, had been engaged to operate the factory. Drisko, it was reported, had never had so much as a peek at the formula sheet, working always under the eye of one or both the partners.

Drisko personally verified the latter rumor when, on the evening of the third day following the proscription of Doc, the new chemist, by devious paths, approached the rear of the old man's cabin and knocked.

"I just thought I'd come and kind of have a talk to you, Doc," said Drisko as he entered. He motioned to the old man to pull down the blinds. "If any one was to come," he whispered behind his hand, "you let 'em in the front door. I'll caper out the back."

Doc drew the blinds, and with something less than his habitual warm hospitality, said, "Well?"

"I know you was robbed and cheated, Doc. Everybody knows it. But that hain't here nor there. Say, that old woman, Busby—"

Mr. Drisko spat viciously in the general direction of the stove. "That old woman— Talk about bein' small enough to crawl through the eye of a needle like the Bible says, why, that old woman is so small she could back through, swingin' Indian clubs."

"Exactly what have you in mind, Drisko?"

"I'll get right down to tacks. They never let me see the formula paper. Not much. They read the dope sheet themselves, and when it's time to add the next kind of dobbywallop, whatver it is, they just point out the bottle. They've even took off the original labels, and have got signs like A-1, A-2 onto them."

"Astute of them, very."

"But, Doc, folks as mean as them hain't entitled to a square deal from nobody. Look what they done to you, Doc."

Drisko glanced about cautiously, leaned in his chair toward the old man, cupped his hands to his lips. "You write me a formula of my own, Dec. I'll learn it. When I spring it on 'em, careless like, that I can run the stuff through without no paper, they'll fall dead. Then they'll come to me, Doc. Doggone 'em. I'll squeeze 'em. I'll shake 'em down for all the loose change they've got. Half will be yourn, Doc."

Before Doc's steady, scrutinizing gaze, Drisko's eyes shifted guiltily. "I'll give you half, Doc," he protested, "honest; I'll cut fifty-fifty."

For once in his simple, trusting career, Doc was not fooled. He knew Drisko

had no more intention of dividing spoils than of taking sudden flight to the moon. Into the old scientist's kind face there crept gradually unwonted cunning, which, of a sudden, gave way to wrath. He clenched his fist, shook it at the outraged Archimedes, who retreated in disorder behind the kitchen stove.

"I've been treated outrageously—damnably!"

Drisko leaned toward the old man eagerly. "I was thinkin' I might run a batch through to-night, when they hain't around. You just fix me out the paper, Doc. I can get in a side window; I left it unlatched a purpose. The original labels is on the supply bottles. I can use them."

Doc pondered a moment, arose briskly, put on his reading glasses, seated himself at the kitchen table. For a few moments he wrote rapidly. "There it is, Drisko. A word of caution. When you add that nitric acid, stand back from the retort for a moment. Explode? No, not likely, though it might."

With a scant, "much obliged," Drisko seized the paper, and fled from the house.

Doc, his spirits having miraculously revived, undressed, donned his cotton flannel nightgown and carpet slippers. The movable bath tub, which somewhat resembled the perambulator built for the world's largest and fattest baby, stood upon the side porch. Wheeling the contrivance before him, the old man repaired up the path to the spring. Dense, black smoke was even then pouring from the chimney of the Doby Kelp Products Company's plant.

The old man had just filled his tub from the spring when there came an admonitory rumble followed by a deafening explosion. A lurid flare showed at one end of the factory. Some one shouted with all his might, "Fire! Fire! The factory's on fire!"

There wasn't a drop of water within a quarter of a mile of the plant. Doc's suggestion to pipe water from the spring had been instantly vetoed by his frugal, erstwhile partners.

Doc seized the handles of the movable tub and dashed down the hill at a speed which half emptied the contrivance and shortly divested him of the carpet slippers. Half way down the trail, bearing much the appearance of the proverbial singed cat, and traveling expeditiously in the opposite direction, Doc encountered Drisko.

A dozen men, running aimlessly about, swinging empty buckets, were already on the scene. The fire, patently the result of an explosion of inflammable gases, had ignited both office and factory where issued the communal chimney. Doc seized a bucket from an excited bystander. One slosh of water extinguished the flame about the factory side of the chimney. The fire, creeping along the ridge pole of the office, the old man apparently did not see.

Mrs. Busby, lowering her skirts about her substantial ankles as she entered the zone of light, came puffing into view. Whether Mrs. Busby had been caught in the act of submitting herself to a treatment, and in her perturbation had forgotten herself, or whether she esteemed the trinket to be of value as fire-fighting apparatus, no one seemed to know. In any event, she held clasped in her hand one of those rubber bulbed atomizers with which the afflicted are wont to apply various medicaments to the throat and nasal passages.

And now Dunning came roaring down the road. "Save my factory! Save my factory!"

One or two helpful souls rushed in and dipped their buckets into Doc's tub. "Never mind the factory, you fools," shouted Dunning. "Save the office! The formula paper's in the office!"

Old Doc glanced up in feigned surprise. Surely enough, the office was on fire. Also the end of the factory had again burst into flames. One flirt of water extinguished the latter in its in-

cipiency. And an officious neighbor was making ready to perform a like service for the fire on the office roof.

Old Doc's lips twitched, formed themselves into a grin. Suddenly he leaned, placed his ear against the factory wall. "Back!" he shouted frantically. "Back! I detect borborymous sounds issuing from the retort. Back! It may explode!"

"Something is goin' to bust!" screamed Mrs. Busby. "I hear it sizzlin'! The chemistry's goin' to bust!"

At the head of the bucket brigade, now thrown into terrified disorder, Dunning and Mrs. Busby charged up the road. At a safe distance, the rabble paused, looked back, wondered at the fanatical courage of Old Doc who stood undismayed, now and then flinging a dash of water onto the smoking boards of the factory. In five minutes the office structure had burned to the ground; the factory was quite intact.

As Dunning and Mrs. Busby began to search frantically in the hot ruins of the office, Doc climbed in at the side window of the factory which the retreating Mr. Drisko had obligingly left open. Upon the floor was the supposititious formula sheet which Drisko, in his flight, had dropped. Doc thrust it into the fire which still burned beneath the retort.

Doc crawled from the window. Some one had brought Dunning a lantern. With Mrs. Busby at his side, Dunning was ruefully examining a splotch of melted tin and lead, the remains of the office canister safe which had held the precious formula paper.

Blithely, Old Doc seized the handles of the portable bath tub, now quite empty, and started for home.

"Oh, Doc," shouted Dunning, "I and Mrs. Busby will be around to see you tomorrow. We want to kind of reorganize and go on with the business."

Doc leaned upon the handles of the tub, and chuckled. Then he said calmly, decisively, "Ten thousand dollars each—cash—cash—that is what it will cost you to get into my new kelp company. Cash."

ASKING A HOW

You can handle a bank without money,
Or a play that is minus a plot;
A joke is supposed to be funny
(Though I've heard one or two that were not).

There must have been "movie" ads. painted
With never a vamp on the sign,
And there is some money so tainted
That I wouldn't have it for mine.

You can do quite a lot with a little,
Provided you fight on and stick,
But what can you do with an egg-nog
That hasn't the sign of a kick?

—Grantland Rice, in the *New York Tribune*.

IN VIOLATION OF HIS OATH

By WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE

ESTERVELT, counselor at law, left the Town Hall at Donaldson in haste. He wanted to make his train back home. It was fairly late at night and very dark. He heard the toot of a distant locomotive and quickened his footsteps. But he soon satisfied himself that it was the up train and not the down train that was tooting, and he slackened his pace. Halfway to the station he met a stranger. This stranger passed him, and then came back and called.

"Say, boss," said the stranger, "could you tell me the time o' night—if you don't mind, boss?"

Westervelt stopped under the street lamp and glanced casually at the man. The man wore a soft felt hat pulled down over his face; he was smiling cordially. Westervelt pulled forth his time piece.

"It's ten o'clock," he said, "just ten." He didn't say any more. Nor did the other man. He merely sawed wood. With a movement that was nothing if not professional, the bulky stranger thrust forth a hand, seized the watch, tore it from Westervelt with a sudden wrench, chain and all, and sped away. Westervelt stood for an instant dazed. Then he yelled at the top of his voice and started after. He didn't go far. The road was deserted. The man with the watch was twice the size of Westervelt, almost. And, besides, as the man sped on, Westervelt took note that another figure darted from a clump of bushes and joined the highway robber. Westervelt turned on his heel.

"Ten o'clock," he said, sorrowfully. "Swiss movement, gold case, heirloom. Worth four hundred and fifty at the outside. To say nothing of the chain. Ah me."

Another toot brought him to his senses. "That's the ten-seven," he told himself. He boarded it just as it was pulling out.

He reached Monroe, his home town, on time. Now, Monroe, twenty miles to the south of Donaldson, was almost twenty times the size of Donaldson. Yet, Monroe's approaches to her railroad stations—especially the P. L. & R. South street station—were quite as lonely, untraveled and unguarded as were those of Donaldson. This was one reason that induced Westervelt to leave the impeachment proceedings at the Donaldson Town Hall before the vote was taken. He was afraid of personal violence. Monroe had had a surfeit of midnight knockouts. Westervelt wanted to escape them.

"Though I don't know what else they could get from me," he told himself. His private fortune, just then, had been his watch. He laughed and rattled in his pocket the small handful of loose change that he had left. The night before he had been sitting in, at Cradlebaugh's gaming table, and had lost.

Hastening through South street in Monroe, he hardly noticed the small clump of men who stood huddled together down Harvey Lane. When he did see them his first impulse was to hasten on. But the size of the crowd attracted him. He retraced his steps.

"Hullo, counselor," said a man in the crowd, "here's a great note. Another knockout. Three in a week."

Westervelt pressed through the crowd. A man with a lantern knelt at the side of an object lying on the ground. The object stirred and groaned, turned on its back and revealed a blood-stained face.

"It's Johnny McCabe, the bookmaker," someone whispered.

Johnny McCabe, revived by whiskey, groaned once more. Then he yelled. "Look in me pants pocket——me pants pocket," he cried with growing excitement. They searched him.

"There's nothin' there," they said. And Johnny McCabe rose to his feet and shrieked. "Ten thousand dollars at the track to-day," he cried, "ten thousand dollars in me right hand pocket. An' me soused—soused on the way home. It's the last drink. I'll never take another. Ten thousand dollars—sandbagged."

He dropped, senseless, to the ground. There was the clang of a gong, a scattering of the crowd. Then they bundled Johnny McCabe into the ambulance and took him to the hospital.

The police settled down to work in dead earnest. And finally they got their man; at least, they said they did.

The man they got was Pemmican—Snake Pemmican. Snake was an individual whose offenses smelled to heaven. There was evidence against him, too. He had been spending money with a lavish hand ever since the night Johnny McCabe had been tapped on the head. There were other things.

"He's the worst all-round crook in the state," the prosecutor of the pleas told his detectives, "and we've got to nail him. Understand? We've got to. See that we do it, boys."

Westervelt was in the courtroom when Snake Pemmican was arraigned. Pemmican pleaded "Not Guilty," as a matter of course.

"You have counsel?" queried the magistrate.

Snake Pemmican glanced at the court in a quizzical way. He knew what the court was thinking. A man who had snaked ten thousand dollars in the last ten days was a man who could employ counsel. But Snake Pemmican sadly shook his head.

"I ain't got none," he returned. The court officers laughed.

The magistrate nodded toward Westervelt. "Mr. Westervelt," he said, "I'll assign you to defend this man. Do you care to take the case?"

Westervelt did. He was young. He was poor. He was a born gambler. He needed money. And he liked the excitement of these things. Moreover, he wanted to rub up against a character like Pemmican, wanted to measure swords once more with Thorneycroft, the prosecutor of the pleas. He took the case. He saw the prisoner at the jail.

"Are you guilty?" That was the first question he asked of Pemmican. Pemmican snorted and waved his hand.

"Now, none o' that, counselor," he retorted. "And, anyways, the first thing is to talk business. What are you goin' to charge me for defendin' this here case. That's the first I want to know."

Westervelt shook his head. "I'm assigned," he answered, "the State pays my bill, you know."

Snake Pemmican leaned over and touched him lightly on the knee. "Counselor," he said, "the State can pay. But I can pay, too. Come, name your figger. What'll it be?"

Westervelt gasped. If there was anything that Westervelt liked it was ready money. He needed a hundred dollars at once. He thought for an instant.

"My fee," he finally announced, "will be five hundred dollars in advance."

Snake Pemmican rose to his feet and patted Westervelt on the back. "Counselor," he said in admiration, "that's what I call real handsome. It's decent in you. Why, most o' these here legal sharks would have charged me twenty-five per cent."

"Twenty-five per cent," echoed Westervelt, "of—what?"

"Of what I got," answered Snake Pemmican.

Westervelt did not remember this until later, in all its full significance. But he knew that, unconsciously, he figured up twenty-five per cent of ten thousand, and saw that his fee of $500 was out of all proportion.

"Might just as well have made it a thousand," he told himself.

"You'll get that five hundred termorrer," said Snake.

Westervelt got it. He spent it. It was good, the spending of that money.

"Now, Counselor," Snake Pemmican assured him, as the trial approached, "I ain't guilty—see? They think they got the goods on me, but they ain't. For why? I got a alibi. You see?"

"An alibi," mused Westervelt hopefully, "but is it good? Is it strong? Eh?"

In his heart of hearts he knew his man was guilty. In his heart of hearts he told himself that the prosecutor of the pleas did have the goods. But his burly client nodded.

"Strong as limburger in July," his client answered, referring to the alibi. Now, looka here. Do you know the Side Pocket up in Donaldson? Or the Palace Cafe? Or Hambridge's Rathskeller? Do you, eh?"

Westervelt had heard of them, had passed them on the street in Donaldson.

"Counselor," went on Snake, "they say this holdup took place here in Monroe just after ten on the night o' the fifth. Well, you go up to Donaldson. You see these chaps—see them there proprietors and them there other chaps. They'll tell you, and tell you straight, that I was in those places just after ten—in Donaldson, twenty miles away. I ain't got no devil wagon, counselor, an' everybody knows that the P. L. & R. takes the best part of a hour to crawl up there from here. All right. It's strong—that alibi."

Westervelt actually grinned. But he went to Donaldson, saw his men, and came back, rejoicing. The alibi was strong. His witnesses were respectable enough; they had never been behind the bars. That they were perjurers in this particular matter he had no doubt. That was their matter. He had their sworn affidavits. They couldn't go back on those at the trial.

"By George," he told himself, "this is conclusive." And so it seemed.

The trial came on. It was reached in the fall of the year, and was commenced just after the midday recess. Thorneycroft, Prosecutor of the Pleas, promised to take up the rest of the afternoon with the examination of his witnesses. The courtroom was crowded, for the newspapers had noted the fact that highway robberies had ceased in Monroe since the capture of Snake Pemmican. Looking on were rich men, poor men, beggar men, thieves. Everybody wanted to see Snake Pemmican, yeggman extraordinary, go through the mill and get sent down the line.

Johnny McCabe, the bookmaker, took the stand. He was, of course, the complaining witness. Thorneycroft had warned the jury that the testimony of Johnny McCabe would be hazy. It was.

"I was soused," admitted Johnny McCabe. "I left the track late in the afternoon, came through Brooklyn somehow, straight enough. When I got in Manhattan Borough, say, I don't remember much about that. No, counselor, I can't tell what train I got out from New York. It must've been that train that gets here just afore ten. It must've been. It's the train I always takes, specially when I'm up against the bars. I ain't no night hawk, though I do get soused."

"Do you remember the assault?" asked Thorneycroft.

"Do I?" snorted Johnny McCabe, the bookmaker. "Am I likely to fergit it, an' me ten thousand to the bad?" He leaned over and took the jury into his confidence. "It was like this, gents," he said, "I was soused. That's all right. But in the midst of it I hears a step up close to

me, like this. Then I turns my head, an' I sees a man—"

"What did he look like?"

Johnny McCabe turned toward the prisoner. "It was a man of his build," he went on, "an' his face. Say, you can search me. So far as I could see, for the dark and the souse, say, it looked like him. For a fact. But I ain't goin' to do no positive swearin' on that. It looked like him, an' I believe it was him. An' there I'll let the matter rest."

"Cross-examine," said the prosecutor of the pleas.

"No questions," announced Westervelt. Westervelt only smiled. He knew he could beat them out. It was his to sit and wait.

"William McElhinny," said the prosecutor.

From the rear of the courtroom there strode forth a tall man with a pleasant, frank, open countenance. Westervelt had never seen him before. He had heard his name mentioned in connection with the preparation of the prosecutor's case.

But when William McElhinny took the stand, Westervelt gazed intently at him. It seemed to him that he had seen the face of McElhinny at some time, somewhere. The memory of it was only vague, but it was there. The hunch of his shoulder, the turn of his head—where had he seen this McElhinny before? He gave it up.

William McElhinny was the star witness for the prosecution. William McElhinny had seen the assault. He had come up on the train that reached Monroe just before ten o'clock; had seen Johnny McCabe upon the train, had alighted as Johnny alighted. McElhinny had gone into Maccia's Railway Saloon by the station to get a drink; had spent five minutes there. Then he had left. Far up South street he saw the form of Johnny McCabe, wending its way carefully, but in a serpentine manner. McElhinny did not know McCabe; knew nothing of his business. But McElhinny, obeying some instinct, followed on. He was within two blocks of McCabe, the bookmaker, when he heard that gentleman cry out in a loud voice. He responded. He reached the spot where he had last seen McCabe. McCabe was not there. The witness heard a struggle to the left, glanced down Harvey Lane, and saw another figure there in addition to the figure of McCabe. This other person, seeing McElhinny, broke suddenly away and ran past McElhinny, away from the station and toward the center of Monroe.

"I saw him," explained McElhinny to the jury. "I saw him, clean an' clear. He had to run under the gas lamp, and I took note of his face when I tried to catch him. He was stuffin' something in his pocket as he passed me. I run after him."

"Do you see the man in court?" queried Thorneycroft.

McElhinny turned to the prisoner. "That is the man, sir," he said quietly.

"Have you seen him since that night?"

"Once, in headquarters, where I picked him out of a line of twenty men. I would know him in a thousand."

"That's all."

"Mr. McElhinny," queried Westervelt, "are you quite sure you did not commit this robbery yourself?"

The witness turned full upon Westervelt a glance quiet, but full of reproach. Westervelt started. Where had he seen that face before?

"I did not, sir," said the witness, gently. That was all. Westervelt was sorry he had asked the question, but the witness was honest. The witness was decent. And Westervelt was convinced that the witness told the truth. It was consistent, this story. It dove-tailed with all other features of the case. Besides, the lavish and bold expenditure of money by Snake Pemmican, the prisoner, immediately after the night of violence, was damaging.

Westervelt knew that Pemmican was guilty.

And yet, he only smiled. For he knew that his defence was an ironclad defence. William McElhinny was but one man, the only man who positively could connect Snake Pemmican with the robbery. McElhinny was a stranger. There was nothing against him. But there was nothing for him, either. And the alibi—

"That's my case," finally said Thorneycroft, Prosecutor of the Pleas.

"It's nearly four," the Court answered, "and we'll adjourn for the day. Mr. Westervelt, you can proceed to-morrow morning."

Westervelt strolled about the streets that night, smoking good cigars. He would win his case. He knew it. Therefore, he dropped it from his mind. He did not go to Cradlebaugh's gaming palace. He didn't want to. Besides, his exchequer was too low. In the midst of his wanderings he found himself before a large, well-lighted church—the First Church. From its interior there floated out the sound of a pleasant voice. Westervelt peeped inside.

"What's going on?" he queried of the sexton.

The sexton shaded his hand. "Revival meeting," he answered, "something extraordinary. Hutchinson, of Wall street. Know him? They say he preaches by the Custom House. Converted Wall street. Come out to Monroe to convert Monroe. He's doin' it, all right. Go in."

Westervelt threw aside his cigar and stepped inside. A tall man, smooth shaven, with a long coat, was upon the platform. "A pagan chief," this man was saying, "builded a pyramid of skulls, and only scholars know his name. There was another who painted angels' faces on his knees, and men by thousands cross a continent to look upon his works." It was just a fragment, but it held the attention of Westervelt. He looked about the audience. It was a well-dressed audience. Hutchinson, of Wall street, was a man who appealed to intelligence.

"Men know what is good in men," went on Hutchinson, of Wall street. Westervelt listened. The crowd listened. Suddenly, Hutchinson, of Wall street, pointed out into the crowd, almost, so it seemed to Westervelt, at Westervelt himself.

"And what do you think of this," said Hutchinson, "last night in my study in New York, I talked with a great lawyer of New York. And he told me of his wonderful defence of a murder case. You would know his name if I should mention the case. There had been experts in that case—experts for the prosecution, experts upon blood stains. Yes. And this great lawyer told me last night that he had handed up to those experts of the prosecution samples of blood upon pieces of cloth, and asked them to specify what kinds of blood they were. And they answered, human blood. And this great lawyer told me that they were not human blood. They were not blood at all. His experts had made them up from salts, and glue and coloring matter; it was artificial blood; it was not blood. And the prosecutor's experts went for naught; honest as they were. And this great man said to me: 'I won my case. My man was acquitted.' And I said to this great lawyer: 'And was your man guilty?' 'I have no doubt he was,' he answered me. Think of it, people of my kind; think of it. A great lawyer; a man sworn to uphold, to enforce the law! An oath—an oath! He had an oath in heaven . . ."

Westervelt drank in the discourse to the last word. And when, at the last, he poured out with the crowd, he just happened to glance over toward a distant corner. There in the corner he saw a man whose face he knew. And the man was William McElhinny, witness-in-chief for the prosecution in the case against Snake Pemmican. Tears streamed from the face of William McElhinny.

"An honest man," thought Westervelt,

a good man. And I——I—a dishonest one. An oath—an oath!"

He walked the streets that night, regardless of his safety. He wanted to think, to think hard. He had solemnly taken an oath to uphold, to enforce the law, to seek justice. He remembered well the taking of that oath. But he had not listened to the oath; could not recall it now, save in a vague sort of way. He was a counselor at law, an officer of the court, and all he had thought about, up to date, was the winning of cases. He had never perjured himself, had never been guilty of subornation of perjury; had never bought a witness or a juror. He was straight—as straight as he was clever, they said in Monroe. And yet, he believed the testimony of William McElhinny, and he knew that Snake Pemmican was guilty. Yet he, Westervelt, was going to acquit Pemmican by the testimony of seven men, unimpeachable, whose alibi was as convincing as it was false. "An oath in heaven." He could not get away from the phrase. It kept seething through his brain.

"I'll withdraw, that's what," he told himself. But, no, that wouldn't do. His duty went further than that. His duty lay on the side of justice. If he merely withdrew, Cowen, or Covington, or somebody else, could take up the case where he laid it down. Snake Pemmican was guilty. Snake Pemmican must be convicted.

"It's up to me," thought Westervelt. It was according to his oath. He would convict Pemmican. He would work hard and return the $500. He would refuse the counsel fee which the State provided. He would start fresh; he would begin right. And to begin right, as he saw it then, was to convict Pemmican, willy nilly. His training, his cleverness, came to his aid.

"I guess," he smiled to himself, when he stepped into the courtroom next morning, "that I know how to damn a case, even my own."

The same big crowd was there. And the crowd was amazed at the apathy, the carelessness of Westervelt. "Must've been up too late at Cradlebaugh's last night," the crowd commented.

The defense was lengthy. It commenced with Snake Pemmican on the stand. Westervelt on the direct, examined him in manner little less than scandalous. By questions, apparently, inadvertent, he laid open the whole, unsavory career of Pemmican, and Thorneycroft seized the opportunity. The jury knew, now, officially, that Pemmican deserved punishment, anyway; that he was an all-round crook; that he was a danger, a menace to society. And the alibi— Oh, yes, the testimony went in, but Westervelt so muddled his own witnesses, so laid them open to attack on side issues, that they almost stood convicted on their own showing. Westervelt had failed to clear Pemmican; he had succeeded in convicting him. He had built up premises that in the hands of an unskillful prosecutor such as Thorneycroft even, would furnish the foundation for a masterly, convincing summing-up that would sweep Pemmican off his feet into the innocuous desuetude of a long term of imprisonment.

"Court's adjourned," finally announced His Honor. Westervelt had not finished with his last witness.

Pemmican, glaring, with angry streaks about his face, clutched Westervelt fiercely by the arm. Westervelt shook him off, and strode off, and went home. He was weak, tired, almost ashamed.

"It was in accordance with my oath," he justified himself. He needed sleep. The worst was over. On the morrow Pemmican would get his just deserts. He dropped upon a lounge.

At nine o'clock that night they awakened him. There was a man downstairs to see him. He brushed the drowsiness from his eyes and went downstairs.

The man was William McElhinny. As Westervelt stepped into the room Wil-

liam McElhinny looked him full in the face. Where had Westervelt seen McElhinny before the trial?

"Counselor," said McElhinny in a broken voice, "last night I was to the revival. I saw you there. I was converted, Counselor."

He fumbled in his pocket. "Counselor," he said, "this here is yours." He passed an object over.

"My watch!" gasped Westervelt. He started. "By George," he thundered, "you are the man who robbed me in Donaldson that night."

The man nodded. "I'm making good," he pleaded. He stopped. "Is that all, Counselor?" he queried.

"All?" queried Westervelt, like a man in a dream.

Then it all came back—the whole iniquity of the man.

"Ten o'clock!" screamed Westervelt, "ten o'clock. That was the time—in Donaldson. I was running for the ten seven. It was ten o'clock." He plucked the man fiercely by the shoulder.

"Then you were in Donaldson, not in Monroe at ten o'clock that night. Then you did not see John McCabe assaulted and robbed by Pemmican. Then your testimony on the stand was false."

The man bowed his head. "I have nothing more to say," he answered. Westervelt breathed deeply. A sudden weakness overpowered him. He sank into a chair.

Why, this man was the chief witness against Pemmican. Westervelt had believed his testimony; had known that it was true. And now—

"Then Pemmican is innocent!" he exclaimed. The man still stood with bowed head. Suddenly, Westervelt rose and gripped the man once more by the arm.

"You say you were converted last night," he said gently. "So was I. So was I. I want you to come to court tomorrow and confess. After that, I shall do my best for you. You—come."

"I'll come," returned the man.

He didn't come. Westervelt, on the whole, didn't blame him. "But it's up to me now," thought Westervelt, "to clear my man. My heaven, such a pickle!" It seemed complex, but many things seem complex to a man who loses sleep. Again the courtroom was crowded. "Westervelt must have something up his sleeve," the crowd thought, wondering at his fiasco of the day before. But, looking at him and at his client, they shook their heads.

"He's gone to pieces," they told each other.

And then, suddenly, in his perplexity, Westervelt swung into his accustomed pace. It was all so simple. Afterward he marked that day with a white stone. For he had come into court that day with a lost case. He knew it. But—

"Have you finished, Mr. Westervelt?" inquired the Court.

Westervelt stepped up and placed his hand upon the book. "I'll be sworn," he said.

It was easy. McElhinny had sworn to a state of facts. He had confessed to perjury the night before. Westervelt detailed the whole conversation, as he had a right to do. He detailed the confession as to the theft of the watch; he exhibited the watch; he testified to the fact of the theft over at Donaldson. He did more. For, as he testified, it came to him that some instinct had guided him in that conversation of the night before. He wanted to get before the jury his own situation; his own sudden resolution, mistaken though it had been, to convict the man Pemmican. It would have been impossible to do this, but for the fact that he had confided his conversion to the stricken McElhinny. And he waited for Thorneycroft to cross-examine, as he knew the prosecutor would.

"Was that all the conversation?" asked Thorneycroft, after the testimony relating to the watch and the perjury.

"No!" thundered Westervelt. No! We talked about—myself."

The crowd leaned forward, the jury gnawed at its fingernails, while Westervelt told the story of his own enlightenment. For the first time, the jury saw a lawyer's soul laid bare. It was new. It was exciting. But it was honest. It was true. They knew it to be true. And they believed.

Thorneycroft fidgeted. "Well, is that all?" he queried.

Westervelt stepped down. He had told the truth.

"William McElhinny," called the prosecutor. The crowd laughed. But the prosecutor called in vain; McElhinny came not.

Then Westervelt arose. His opportunity had come. He was counsel for a bad man. He appreciated the fact. But he was the apostle of justice . . . Well, it was easy. Still, the gods that day placed on his lips the honey of Hymettus. On that day William Westervelt made his name for eloquence, for law, for cleverness, for truth, for unmitigated honesty. Snake Pemmican stepped down and out, free as the air without.

Snake Pemmican followed Westervelt into his private office in the Main Street Building.

"Pemmican," said Westervelt, producing the money, "here's five hundred dollars. I've had hard work borrowing it, but there it is. I'm going to pay you back. I wasn't working for you, Pemmican. I was working for Justice. And she has paid me in full. You see?"

Pemmican thrust the bills into his pocket, after rolling them up and tying an elastic about them. "Counselor," he said, "I'll take it back, because, you know, you tried to do me dirt." He stood there musing for an instant. "It was a lucky thing for me," he said at last, "that Bull McElhinny, of New York, got religion once more the other night."

"Once more?" queried Westervelt. "Does he often get religion?"

"Does he?" snorted Pemmican. "He's that soft. Returnin' that watch—that's him, when he gets converted. This is the tenth time in the last six years he's been converted."

"Why," stammered Westervelt, "do you mean to say you know this man McElhinny? Do you know him?"

"Know him? Me an' him is pals. An' when he ain't got religion, or gettin' it, or gettin' over it, there ain't a soberer man on earth than him. Only drat it, just 'cause he's got it now, he won't help me crack a crib for at least three weeks; he's that particular."

"He robbed me, all right," said Westervelt.

"I know he did," assented Pemmican, "because I saw him do it."

"You? Were you there?"

"I was—at ten o'clock that night. I come up to Donaldson out o' Monroe on that there train that got to Donaldson at ten o'clock."

"What's McElhinny got against you, then," asked Westervelt, "that he perjured himself against you on the stand?"

Pemmican grinned. "You misjudge Bull McElhinny, of New York," said Pemmican. "He ain't got nothin' agin me, and he don't perjure himself—not important, he don't. It was only a little matter of an hour. That's all. He saw what he saw, Counselor. Aw, come, you're bright enough for that. You know a trick or two yourself."

"You—don't mean to say that you—?"

"Aw, say, Counselor," returned Pemmican, winking, "they had me dead to rights, the police did. Yes, sir. You knew that. But they was shady on the time. Well, it was up to me an' Mac to fix it up. Mac had to go on the stand for the prosecutor—ain't Thorneycroft a muff?—and tell about it with a lie. Oh, he saw me all right. An' he tried to catch me, for we both were runnin' for a train. Mac went on for the prosecution with a lie—as to the time, mind you. And I backed myself up with an alibi that was the truth. In course I knocked out McCabe. But not at ten. At nine,

Counselor, at nine. Oh, sure, Mac ain't no perjurer. He told just what he seen, just as he seen it. But the hands in his clock was fixed, that's all. He told the truth. And so did everybody else, you see. And that Thorneycroft, he swallowed it all right. Aw, say, you was the only one to see through the game, wasn't you?"

Westervelt smiled weakly. He wished he had seen through it soon enough.

"Counselor," said Pemmican, "you tried to do me dirt, but I don't bear no malice. You was clever all right, the way you lied about that confab with Bull McElhinny. That was good. We was in a hole. But you pulled me out. Say, looka here, Counselor," he finally blurted out, "I ain't no hog." He pulled out an elastic-bound roll of bills from his pocket. "You take this here. You need it more than I do, I should think."

He left Westervelt standing there, helplessly. Westervelt woke up five minutes after Snake Pemmican had gone. He glanced at the roll of bills within his hand.

"Well," he assured himself wearily, "maybe I've earned it, after all."

He took off the rubber band. The roll fell apart. It was a wonderful roll, that roll. On the outside was a ten-dollar bill, old, greasy, genuine. Inside there was blank, green paper, nothing else.

"Stung!" cried Westervelt. "Stung!" He thought about it for an instant. "And glad of it at that," he told himself.

He was well paid. He had learned a few new tricks. And the biggest trick that he had learned, Hutchinson, the street preacher of Wall street, had taught him.

"That," Westervelt assured himself, "is the trick of sticking to my oath."

CHAKITON—FIRST STOP

By IDA M. EVANS

IF there had been any one else to send, it is likely that Jack Marley would still be carrying untrimmed shapes from the reserve stock to the display counters. Marley was twenty, and had graduated from the Lake View High School only two years before Jim McWayth found appendicitis, gastric indigestion, and a panicky heart all in one day out in Iowa, and had to be brought back on a stretcher to Chicago.

But there was no one else to send. So old Johnson, who secretly liked Marley's pleasant assured way of saying good-morning, told McWayth that he would let the boy go out to Chakiton, pick up the sample trunks and complete the trip.

McWayth had sold millinery in southern Iowa for as many years—and the years were not few—as the Bon Ton Millinery Company had been in existence.

On a white iron bed, in a white-walled room, he sent the nurse out of the room that he might use the proper language in wailing about his orphaned territory and the clumsy handling it would get from its young foster father.

"I'll try him on a few towns only," soothed Johnson. "He can't do much damage in Chakiton, because it's never yielded a big order yet."

"No," agreed McWayth, and in spite of his intestinal agony, he grinned. "All I ever sold to were the Burton Sisters. Old Henderson and Bernstein would turn away customers before they would let a road salesman stock them up. Be sure and tell the young one to call on them. It'll be a liberal education for him."

Now, what Jack Marley knew about life, he had learned not more than one scant yard from his widowed mother's decorous apron strings. When old Johnson called him into the glittering glass cage that harbored the presidential dignity of the Bon Ton Company, he went in fear and trembling. He couldn't imagine what the old man wanted—unless a profane roast was coming because the day before Marley had dumped a box of cotton marigolds in an order where only silk poppies were supposed to bloom.

Instead, the old man greeted him with a genial smile that was like an electric shock, it popped so unexpectedly from his withered face, and told him that No. 12 of the Burlington would drop him in Chakiton the next morning. He cautioned him against losing any of McWayth's customers.

Marley's eyes filled with grateful tears, and his face—that had been on speaking terms with a razor only eighteen months—turned pink.

He packed a suitcase as well as he could with trembling fingers, kissed his admiring mother good-bye, and stepped on the train with much the same tumult of emotion that Caesar stepped over the Alps.

In Chakiton, he pridefully joined the parade of suitcases that stalked from the depot to the red-brick, two-story hotel. After he had spent two long delicious hours arranging his flowers and braids, he went forth to call upon the trade.

He struck Mrs. Henderson's shop first. It was nearest the hotel. Three doors beyond was Bernstein's Elite Parlors. Half a block farther, the Burton Sisters had their Emporium.

Had old Mrs. Henderson been in her shop that morning, Marley would have experienced a volley of language beside which old Johnson's most virulent effort would have seemed a schoolboy's falter. Mrs. Henderson bought her spring goods in August—job lots and such, that she disposed of the following April as though they were just unpacked. Her fall stock she bought in December—when wholesale houses were throwing them away. And when a woman can buy that way and sell at the same top-notch prices as her competitors who buy at respectable times, no mere man has any chance with her in a talking bout. A sixty-horse power machine and a twelve-inch cable couldn't have dragged McWayth into her shop.

If she had been in, she would have told Marley what she thought of disreputable drummers in general and him in particular. Then she would have turned the hose of abuse on wholesale houses as a class, and the Bon Ton as an individual. By the time she had worked from the villainy of wholesalers to the trickery of her competitors in Chakiton, Marley would have been on a dead run up Main Street. Then, with a chastened air, he would have slunk into the next store.

Bernstein would have snubbed him cruelly, because Bernstein loathed courteous, chastened beginnings more than he loathed cabbage roses when every Easter hat begged loudly for sweet peas.

On that March morning, it happened that old Mrs. Henderson was not in her shop. She was at home, her feet in a bucket of hot mustard water, her aching head wrapped in red flannel.

Stella Mayle was tending store. Stella was seventeen. Not a rose in Marley's choice imported collection was so pink and white and prettily curved as her cheeks and chin. And not one of his most expensive French violets came within a hundred miles of rivaling the dark purple-blue of her eyes.

After eighteen months in a wholesale house, Marley was not altogether ignorant of the fact that the world holds many pink-cheeked girls. But to date this was the only one in millinery circles who did not crush him with a haughty stare or call him "sonny." He was convinced at once that Iowa excelled in the production of something besides corn.

Stella had left high school less than a year before. Simultaneously with a superficial knowledge of algebra and the genitive case, she had learned — and taken a post-graduate course under Mrs. Henderson—that all traveling salesmen are roués, drunkards and wife-abandoners.

This was her first face-to-face, speaking experience with the wicked tribe. Always before, she sewed bandeaux demurely in the rear room while Mrs. Henderson shooed them out the front door.

Being able to trace her lineage straight back to Eve, Stella ached for tangibility. So, after chiffons had been discussed, the weather condemned, and the condition of trade talked about as seriously as though both knew what they were saying, she asked Marley, in properly rebukeful tones, if he didn't get tired of drinking and gambling all the time.

Marley's eyes rounded and he began a hot denial. He began it, but he choked it off before it reached the air. For the tone, though rebukeful and stern with missionary zeal, was not altogether devoid of admiration. And the look in the girl's eyes reminded him, although he didn't stop to analyze it, of the look in a small boy's eyes when he watches the most daring bareback rider at the circus.

He knew that McWayth, when home in Chicago, went regularly to Sunday school, and that Deering, who had Illinois, was a prohibitionist. All the same,

if commercial standing, to be a standing, required a veneer of wickedness, Marley was ready for the veneer. "Awfully tired," he answered. His voice was bored and drawly. "But," plaintively, "what's a fellow to do? Jumping from one town to another, not knowing a soul, no one to talk to but hotel clerks and conductors and porters and customers and other salesmen. And no one to care if a fellow's sick—or blue—"

"I suppose," said Stella pityingly, "that you *do* have some excuse!"

"Oh, it isn't what you call *excuse*," he corrected gently. "But when a fellow spends evening after evening alone—" And then quite irrelevantly, he added, "What are you going to do this evening?"

Stella's pink cheeks grew five shades pinker. "Oh—my father wouldn't allow—" Then she bit her tongue, and the five shades were increased by ten.

Marley sighed. "A hotel isn't a homelike place," gloomily.

"No," she agreed dolefully. "And I suppose that you are so lonely that you can't resist gambling!"

Up to that moment of his commercial career, Marley's gambling experience had consisted of two cigars won and a nickel lost. His sigh testified to at least five thousand dollars. Five minutes more, and he would have confessed to three wives and an uncontrollable thirst for rye straight. But he was headed off by the entrance of two elderly women in ancient black. They brought their last year hats wrapped in newspapers, and Marley soon knew that they were prepared to spend two hours in talk of style.

He left reluctantly, and sauntered into Bernstein's Elite Parlors, so inflated by knowledge of his wickedness that he forgot to be diffident. Now Bernstein never gave a salesman an order, never talked to salesmen, never looked at salesmen. He bought only in Chicago and New York. And although he did not depend altogether on last year's job lots, he was as well known for sharp tricks and haggling as Mrs. Henderson. He had never given the Bon Ton Company an order—considered the firm's prices monstrous.

But Bernstein was standing in his door when Marley entered Mrs. Henderson's shop. He spotted a new man and waited, grinning, to see him jump out. Bernstein didn't know that Mrs. Henderson was sick at home.

When the minutes passed and the new man didn't appear, Bernstein wondered. With each minute, his wonder grew. Never before in the history of the retail trade had any salesman stayed in that shop over fifty consecutive seconds. Marley stayed forty minutes. Bernstein watched and timed him—and grew very thoughtful. Was it possible that the Bon Ton was putting out a low-priced line—or cutting prices before Easter?

Marley's sauntering entrance and absorption—he was thinking of Stella's complexion — passed for travel-weary salesmanship. To the careless invitation to come to the hotel and look over the line, Bernstein instantly assented. He would be there at two o'clock sharp.

After Marley had got from the Burton Sisters the small order that had been waiting since McWayth sought the stretcher, he strolled back for dinner. In Chakiton dinner is at twelve-thirty.

Marley had always lived at home—which was very pleasant, but monotonous. The prospect of eating in a big alien dining room, taking his choice of under-done mutton, fat pork chops and overdone beef, and drinking grayish-black coffee, filled him with absolute delight. There were five other salesmen at the table. He listened rapturously while they discussed shoes, cutglass, flat ware, triple plate, the rise in silver on account of the upheaval in China, the sassy ways of some customers, the cotton crop, and the only two hotels in the state that served a decent steak. And his youth and enthusiasm may be estimated from

the fact that he never knew the languid waitress brought him liver and bacon instead of the ordered rare roast beef.

While he lounged in the sample room, waiting for Bernstein, a spray of pink rose, a masterpiece of artistic artificiality, suggested an excuse for returning to Mrs. Henderson's shop. Within ten seconds, a boy was taking it over, with a note to the effect that Marley would drop in later, and get her opinion of it. The house al ays liked to know how the novelties appealed to customers, etc., etc.

As the boy went out, Bernstein came in. After a careful, critical inspection of the line, he snorted. No bargains there. He pawed the straw shapes with violent hands. Same old line that he had refused to buy in Chicago six weeks before. Same old prices. His wrath boiled. He had been lured with false pretenses.

"Lot of nerve you got!" he chortled, "bringing me down to look at this junk—"

Before he could finish the sentence, the door bounced open. A small shabby old woman, with eyes like little black needles, bounced in. From one hand dangled the pink spray. How was Marley, ignorant amateur that he was, to know that only death or total paralysis could keep Mrs. Henderson away from her shop in the afternoon. Mornings were not so important. Most lady Chakitonites were busy with housework in the morning.

Marley deduced the lady's identity from her possession of the wreath. Fatuously he assumed that she wanted more.

"Ah! Mrs. Henderson," he smiled, "did you finally get down?"

Mrs. Henderson had spurted over the three blocks that lay between her shop and the hotel at a gait all out of proportion to her age and lung-capacity. She intended to fling the spray straight in the face of the presumptuous person who had sent it, and warn him to keep away from any girl employed in her shop. She had to wait a moment to get her breath.

And in that moment, Bernstein edged up, pricked up his ears—also his nose and eyes. He hadn't thought much of that spray—maybe the line was better value than he had supposed. Never before had he distrusted his own judgment. But there was no denying that the shabby old woman in rusty black was a wise old buyer.

"I'm looking at this line," he said sternly. "Just wait your turn, Mrs. Henderson."

"What!" shrieked Mrs. Henderson. And then *her* eyes and ears took a new angle of observation. If Bernstein—*Bernstein*—who loathed all road salesmen, and especially young road salesmen—if he thought the line worth looking at, the Bon Ton Company must be selling at unheard of prices.

She forgot the spray and her wrath. The preceding August job lots had been scarce. This spring her stock was low, and she had been debating whether to buy now at the ruinous prices of early season or lose part of her trade by not having sufficient stock. Several customers had balked at waiting until July for Easter hats merely that she might make more profit.

"I'm here!" she announced defiantly. "And while I'm here, I look at this line. And I don't care about buying before any rubbernecks!"

"Aw! I was here first!" Bernstein objected angrily. "And I'm in a hurry! This ain't fair business!"

"You're using words you don't know the meaning of," said Mrs. Henderson, tearing a bit of foliage to see if it was made of paper."

"I was here first." Bernstein appealed to Marley.

Bernstein had no Stella in his shop. "*Ladies* first!" came suavely from Marley.

"Ladies! Bah-h-h!"

"Ha! Ha!" croaked old Mrs. Henderson in triumph. Among all the objects of her detestation, Bernstein stood at the

head of the line. He stole her ideas, her trimmers, her customers. Worse than all that, he was threatening to buy the building she occupied and raise her rent.

"Set your feet t'other side of that door," she ordered.

Furious, but helpless, Bernstein set his feet as she desired.

Then she bought. She blinked at the prices until her scanty lashes almost fell off. "Nary a cent will I make," she groaned. But, of course, prices were high at the beginning of the season—and Bernstein's judgment was good. If the line wasn't the best and lowest out—why, Bernstein would't be buying it. And when she had made the plunge, she wanted the benefit as soon as possible. Marley had duplicate samples of part of the line and could deliver several articles that day.

Bernstein must have loitered in the corridor. As she went out, he rushed in.

"That was a low dirty trick," he snarled. "Turning me down—"

"Forget it!" Marley airily advised him, and rapidly sorted the duplicates that he could spare for immediate delivery. He was hoping that he would find opportunity, when he took them to the shop, to persuade Stella to persuade her father that a lonely young man would get into all sorts of trouble in a lonely hotel—trouble that he would elude if he could spend the evening with a nice girl. And so he did not really care to waste time with Bernstein even for an order. One could get orders in any town.

Bernstein was petrified. Divers salesmen had used many tones to him—polite, servile, entreating, arguing, beseeching, whining—but never had his ears been assailed by the insolent unconcern of that "Forget it!"

"Maybe you got no time to wait on me!" he sneered.

"Not very much," candidly. "Unless you look about darned quick and tell me in a jiffy what you want."

On a trunk lay Mrs. Henderson's order—face up. Bernstein sneaked a look at it, walked past it, read it, scowled over it. The prices were not low. They were high—Bon Ton prices always were high. Nevertheless, there was one indisputable fact—old Mrs. Henderson had never been known to get stung. There must be some value in the goods that his less-sure eyes couldn't locate.

Marley had the box ready to take to Mrs. Henderson. He looked impatiently at the dilatory Bernstein.

"Come on," he said finally. "There's no use spending all day on one little bum order!"

Bernstein shook a virulent fist at the order on the trunk. "Double that!" he commanded. "And say, I'll write in to the firm to send some one that's got time to wait on me!"

He did. But Marley's daily report got there first. And after that shock, neither Johnson nor McWayth would have been stunned by the news that Iowa had gone Democratic.

"How," McWayth feebly asked Marley, six weeks later, "did you make such a hit in Chakiton?"

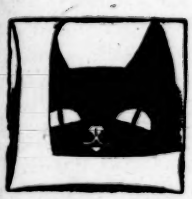
"I guess I haven't made it yet," Marley confessed morosely. "But she says that maybe after a while she'll let me write to her."

Which was as close as McWayth ever got to the bottom of the mystery.

It is suggested that we keep our coal this winter in the empty sugar-bowl.—*Amsterdam Recorder.*

THE DEVIL'S GLUE

By JAMES FRANCIS DWYER



LASCELLE came first to Keloa. He had evaded the Law by a circuitous route. From Tilbury Docks he had shipped in a Blue Star liner to Sydney; a French brig had carried him from that port to Noumea; while the last lap in his wild race for a safe haven was made on a bucking copra schooner beating down to Rarotonga. Keloa, looking like a green umbrella whose lace trimming was the rice-white beach of glittering diamond dust, seemed an ideal retreat, and the trade-driven palms whispered a song of comfort when he came ashore.

The loneliness had just touched his soul when Delmont came. Lascelle welcomed the stranger. In strict accordance with the rule of the Fringe he asked no questions, but although his tongue was silent, his eyes gathered the information he needed. A well-bred man cannot conceal his breeding, and Delmont made no attempt to do so. Lascelle's heart filled with gratitude as he watched the other eating. In the days of loneliness he had prayed for a companion, without daring to stipulate the grade of intelligence, and in answer to that prayer a man had been sent who sipped cocoanut-milk as if it were Heidsieck, and ate yams with the grace of a Beau Brummel. Lascelle wept as he watched.

Delmont was solicitous when he saw the tears. "Sick?" he questioned.

"Sick!" repeated Lascelle. "Yes, I am sick! Good God! I haven't spoken to a white man for two months!"

Delmont looked around with a shudder. The weird expectancy of the South Sea scenery gripped him suddenly. "It is lonely," he said.

"It is hell!" screamed Lascelle. "Our hell!"

The other glanced at him uneasily, but said nothing.

"Excuse me for showing such cowardice," continued Lascelle, "but this—this requires grit."

Delmont came to the same conclusion in the days that followed. It is nice to dream of coral islands, where the fragrance of the golden frangipanni and the murmur of the pandanus groves lull the tired senses of the visitor, but the reality palls. The loneliness throttled Delmont as it did his companion. Both had been expelled from their Eden, and blind Justice above Old Bailey held the sword which barred their return.

In their dreams came visions of those other days. They heard the tinkle of glasses, the soft laughter of women, and the cries of boon companions, but the cobweb bridges across the ocean were shattered by the dawn. Then remorse flayed them with whips of memory, and sorrow for their sins brought little relief. Crime is the devil's glue and contrition is a poor detergent.

By tacit understanding they set a geographical boundary upon their conversation. The hatches of oblivion must be nailed down upon the dead pasts, and, in an endeavor to do so, they kept their conversation south of the Line. They discussed Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Auckland, places that seemed, like their own little prison, to be far away from the great throbbing heart of the

world, but they never mentioned England.

Once Lascelle had spoken of Gibraltar, and then choked and sputtered as he noticed the blunder. Gibraltar seemed only a stone's throw from Bayswater! And Delmont had also stumbled. In the early days he had told of a commissioner at Penang who went "home," and Lascelle winced.

"Home!" he gasped. "Home? Why, he—" He sprang up and rushed away over the prickly coral rocks where the quaint mummy-apples stood up stoutly under their load of yellow fruit. Hours after, when he returned, Delmont apologized for his offence.

It was one moonlight night, three months after Delmont's arrival, that the longing to talk of those other days battered down the barrier which they had erected. It was Lascelle who made the breach. The moon was sweeping her silver train across the ocean, and he pointed to the reflection with a shaking hand.

"Look!" he cried. "Doesn't it—doesn't it remind you of the Thames below Gravesend?"

Delmont cursed, but the desire to talk of the past swept away his anger. The flood was unloosed. The two became hysterical in their longing to chatter and compare. They flung themselves back by sheer force of will into the life from which they were outlawed. Their excited imaginations transformed their surroundings. The white beach vanished; in its place stretched the arc-lighted Strand and Piccadilly, and arm in arm they swaggered up and down and talked incessantly.

They tried to rival each other in drawing wild comparisons between the moonlit surroundings and the pictures which were fluttering through their brains like the films of a drunken biograph.

"St. Paul's!" cried Delmont, pointing to a dome-shaped rock which towered over the palms.

Lascelle choked. "And there are the Law Courts and St. Clement's," he spluttered. "Let's go down to the Mall. Laugh, damn it, laugh!"

They woke the native village with hysterical laughter. England was a million miles away if measured by the chain of Hope, and the realization made them drunk with pain. They were attempting to pluck despair from their breasts, well knowing that the attempt would prove a failure. They nodded to imaginary persons, and whispered information to each other concerning the specters of their brains.

"Billy Etherington of the Guards," murmured Lascelle. "Lord George's youngest, you know."

"Really! Chap mixed up in the Eldon scandal?"

"Yes, that's he. Funny case, isn't it?"

"I should think so. Hello, there's old Southman."

"So it is. God evening, Freddy."

They were prancing up and down the sand with mincing steps, mad masqueraders attempting to throw off the icy hand which gripped their throats. Up in the dark pandanus groves the simple-minded islanders crept out to watch and wonder.

"Let's sing something," cried Delmont.

Lascelle agreed. They woke the echoes of Keloa with music-hall melodies. They shrieked out greetings to imaginary friends and urged them to join in the chorus. They bandied specter policemen and hansom drivers, and the moon looked at them curiously as it slipped down behind the coral bar.

The darkness chilled the blood that their unleashed imaginations had stirred to fever heat. The blue lips of the Pacific gurgled scornfully at their make-believe. A rain squall squelched down from the vine-wreathed cone of old Pelau, and it splattered on the beach like derisive laughter.

Lascelle sobbed. The trickery of his hungry mind was exposed to him.

"It's no use, Delmont," he stammered.

"They're not our songs—not now. Listen!"

He lifted up his fine baritone and chanted a verse of Kipling's "Broken Men." The words went out over the sobbing Pacific, and Delmont cursed.

"This is our hymn," sobbed the singer. "Listen to this:

'We sail o' nights to England
And join our smiling Boards;
Our wives go in with Viscounts
And our daughters dance with Lords.
But behind our princely doings,
And behind each coup we make,
We feel there's Something Waiting.
And—we meet It when we wake.'"

"Shut up!" shrieked Delmont. "Shut up, I tell you!"

"Why?" blubbered Lascelle. "He knew us, didn't he? We're the 'Broken Men,' Delmont! God! I didn't understand the words till I came here. Now, again!

'Ah, God! One sniff of England—
To greet our flesh and blood—
To hear the handsoms slurring
Once more through London mud!
Our towns—'"

A sob strangled the voice of the singer, and the wind whipped a gurgle of contempt out of the snarling waves. Delmont's curses were loud and deep.

"No use of cursing," spluttered Lascelle. "We're done, Delmont. That song was written for us!"

They staggered drunkenly. The reaction was upon them. The nostalgia had the effect of drink, and they muttered brokenly as they reeled along the shore.

"Listen!" screamed Lascelle. "Hear the cursed waves? Do you know what they are saying? You don't! Listen again! Don't you hear them? They say it all day long, the same question:

'How stands the old Lord Warden?
Are Dover's cliffs still white?'"

Delmont broke away with a muttered cry and rushed up the path to the thatched huts, leaving his companion to shout his regrets and longings into the night.

Next morning they avoided each other. Fear of what they had said during the insane moments of the previous evening gripped them, and they eyed each other suspiciously. Some part of the grim skeletons may have been exposed during the momentary madness on the moonlit beach, and such a possibility suggested danger.

But Fate dragged them together before the day was half over. A missionary schooner from Levuka hove to outside the reef, and a native teacher came ashore to inquire into the spiritual condition of the people. Lascelle and Delmont had the true beachcomber's dislike of the religious person, but when the visitor opened the big box of tracts and periodicals distributed by the South Sea Mission, they sprang to attention. A bulky file of a London daily newspaper was placed upon the grass, and the two white men pounced upon it.

Over and over they rolled, the teacher making unavailable efforts to separate them or secure the cause of the disturbance.

"Halve it!" shrieked Lascelle, as the sheets tore in the clutch of the other. "Halve it, damn you, and we'll change!"

Delmont agreed, and each hugging his share of the prize, retired to his own quarters to pore over the contents.

Lascelle flung himself down on the plaited mat in the hut and stared at the sheets. The paper fascinated him. He had not seen one for months. Greedily his eyes raced down column after column, drinking in the news, and he muttered brokenly as items of interest were clutched and digested. A dread year was being opened to him. Men had died, men had married, men had gone up and down, and the changes in the conditions of old acquaintances brought quick exclamations of astonishment from him as he read.

Suddenly he pushed his face close to the printed sheet, his eyes riveted on a photograph. With dry lips he read the

paragraph beneath the cut, and then gave a low whistle of surprise as his mind assimilated the information.

"A thousand pounds reward!" he muttered hoarsely. "By Jove, he went it bigger than I thought!"

He read and re-read the dozen lines beneath the newspaper cut, then he took his knife from his pocket, clipped out the photo and the accompanying letterpress, folded the piece of paper and put it away inside the cover of his watch.

"A thousand pounds reward!" he repeated again. "Only a few days after I skipped too! I wonder if he knew! I wonder if—" He stopped with a gasp and turned the faded sheets breathlessly.

The pages crackled as he flicked them over, his eyes eating up the columns. In the struggle for the file the papers had been misplaced, and he cursed as he looked in vain for the dates he wanted. They were not there. He finished with a growl of rage and sat staring at the pile of discolored sheets.

"If he has them?" he growled. "If the swine knows!"

The possibility of such a thing made the little eyes twinkle in their skull caverns as he watched the papers. If Delmont knew? With a white face he gathered up the bundle and rushed madly towards the pandanus grove where his fellow island dweller was digesting the other portion.

"Ready to change?" snapped Lascelle.

Delmont turned on his back and held up the sheets he was reading. Their eyes met as they exchanged the tattered papers. Both started to speak and both stopped. Lascelle made an effort to continue, broke off suddenly, and then snatching the other half of the file, dashed back to his little thatched house. Down on the silver beach the native missionary was leading the brown-skinned islanders in a simple hymn, but Lascalle heard nothing but the question which his own fear sent throbbing through his brain. **Did Delmont know?**

He flung himself down again and started to flick the sheets. The horror of finding something that had been discovered by the sharp eyes of Delmont was upon him as he read.

"Fifth of March," he muttered. "Fifth of March. Ah! Here we are! If it was published at all it would be— *Oh, hell!*"

The last words came from him like a cry of agony. A little square hole had met his eyes as he turned the page, and now, as the peculiar trick of Destiny was revealed to him, his nerves gave way and he burst into tears.

It was too late then to adjust matters. The opportunity had passed. Lascelle and Delmont had sinned against the one commandment of the outer Fringe, and the punishment for the crime was swift.

The days that immediately followed bred suspicion. The small scraps of paper tucked in the clothes of the two absconders kept them apart. Insanely each gloated over the information he possessed concerning the wrongdoing of the other, and each tried in vain to assure his imagination that the clipping which the other had taken from the file had no reference to his case. But intuition would not be denied. The fear-stricken imagination of each painted the cutting which reposed in the pocket of the other.

The two remained apart. They became watchful of each other for no apparent reason—they were a thousand miles from the nearest throne of Justice. Each compared his own crime with that of the other described in the paragraphs attached to the photographs, and to the mind of each, his own crime seemed the greater. Naturally the reward would be greater. Lascelle reading the offer of a thousand pounds' reward for Delmont, wondered if five thousand had been offered for his own apprehension! Delmont's imagination set the reward upon his own head at six thousand, which was five times greater than the reward offered for Lascelle on the piece of paper he carried in his leather pouch!

Then came the news which brought about a crisis. Natives from Pilaulo brought information regarding the movements of H. M. S. Royalist which was cruising in the islands, and fear flamed in the minds of the two white men. The man-of-war would surely call at Keloa, and the probable action of his companion troubled the mind of each. Stories of immunity purchased by turning informer and giving evidence that would lead to the arrest of a greater criminal sprang up before the minds of both, and as each considered himself the greater criminal of the two, there were sleepless nights at Keloa while the warship was cruising down towards the island. Each knew the other's craving to return to the land from which he was outlawed, and the dread of treachery was great.

The Royalist was at Ninua, an island sixteen miles away, when the Fates pulled up the curtain for the last act. Lascelle, on awakening one morning, found that his companion had fled the island in the dory! Delmont was the weaker of the two, and fear had urged him to fly. He intended to make for one of the smaller islands of the group, and to find a hiding place there till the man-of-war had returned to Auckland, but the possibility of such an act did not enter the brain of Lascelle when he learned of the disappearance. His one thought was of treachery. Delmont, in his opinion, had gone to meet the warship so that he would be certain of the reward of an informer, and with hate surging in his breast he dragged out the whaleboat and set sail after his companion.

"The little rat!" he screamed. "The thieving little rat! If I catch him I'll feed him to the sharks!"

He pointed the whaleboat to the westward. Delmont had two hours' start, but Lascelle's boat was the faster. He swept through the opening in the coral reef and out into the open ocean, shouting threats and curses to the winds as the boat sped along. He was to be sold by the man he had welcomed when he first came to the island!

"I knew he had that cutting!" he shouted. "I knew that he was waiting for a chance to do this!"

The hot morning passed slowly. Lascelle ripped along before the breath of the Trades, but he saw no sign of his quarry. Fat clouds rolled up over the horizon, but he took no notice. He only watched the red and yellow smeared ocean to the westward, over which Delmont had fled. He wanted revenge, and he troubled little about his own fate after that had been accompished.

A speck appeared on the horizon and he raved madly. It was Delmont! Lascelle stood up and screamed his threats. He was sure of him now. The dory was coming back to him, and every minute lessened the distance. He could see Delmont crouching in the bottom of the boat, and he yelled triumphantly. His fingers clenched as he thought of the revenge he would take for the act of treachery.

The whaleboat gained fast. Lascelle was within a mile of the dory; half a mile; then he came close enough to see the white face of the runaway.

"I'll kill you!" he screamed. "You dirty informer, you!"

His words rang out loudly, and the peculiar stillness of the ocean suddenly attracted him. The wind was falling, and the surface of the water was as smooth as glass.

"Good Lord, a squall!" he screamed, and he sprang to haul down the flapping sail before the mad fury was upon him. It was coming. Out of the south it swept leaping over the water, tearing the glazed surface with a harrow of white foam, and it fell upon the two small boats like an unleashed hound.

Five hours afterwards, the first officer of H. M. S. Royalist entred the captain's cabin and saluted.

"The two men we picked up are conscious now, sir," he said, quietly. "They

owned up about the clippings and photographs, too. Quite a find for us. Lascelle, the runaway cashier from the London and County Bank, thought the other fellow, who was manager of the Unicorn Investment Company, was coming to give us the tip, and he put after him and was catching up to him before the squall capsized both."

"Are they friendly now?" asked the captain.

"Yes, sir, quite friendly. When they came to their senses they seemed pleased that we had grabbed them. I guess it's no use dodging your gruel. Those two came far enough to dodge what was coming to them, but the law gathered 'em in, after all."

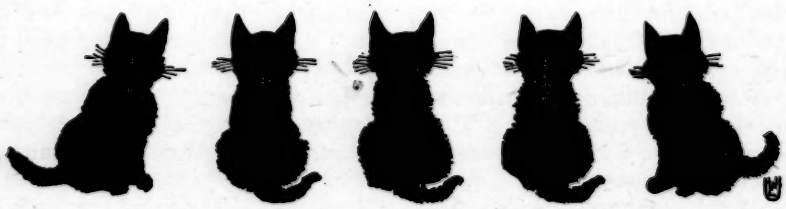
The captain lifted his finger to restrain the officer's tongue, and the two listened. Up into the warm air went the voices of a baritone and a tenor.

"That's them," murmured the officer.

The words came into the cabin and swirled out over the Pacific. It was the cry of the heart hungry for a glimpse of the home land.

"Our town of wasted honor
Our streets of lost delight!
How stands the old Lord Warden?
Are Dover's cliffs still white?"

"H'm," grunted the captain. "I'm glad they are taking their capture in a philosophical spirit, Mr. Barnes. Let us hope it will not be foggy going up the channel; I'd like to satisfy their curiosity about Dover's cliffs before the Old Bailey gets a grip of them."



THE TWINNED PEARL

By GEORGE J. BRENN

DID you ever pick up a newspaper and run across an alleged funny column containing a tedious collection of queries beginning, "What has become of—", etc.? You don't recall any? Sure you do! F'rinstance, "What has become of the old-fashioned grocer who stuck a potato on the spout of your kerosene can?" "What has become of the old-fashioned mother who dosed her kids with sulphur and molasses every spring?" "What has become of the old-fashioned school-boy who sent his teacher a comic valentine?" Sure, I knew you'd remember 'em!

Some day one of our weary columnists is going to fill space by asking, "What has become of the old-fashioned business man who saved string and nails and caused them to do double duty?" And if I spot the query I'm gonna answer it by unhesitatingly referring him to 2308 Lispenard street, where Mr. Adolf Levy conducts a wholesale business in cloaks and suits.

Mr. Levy is an astute business man. He believes, first of all, in keeping expenses down to a minimum. Then he believes in large sales. Simple, but axiomatic as a formula for making money. Levy is a bit too old to go gallivanting about the country selling goods, so he hires the best young salesmen in his line to do that for him. Sure, I worked for him for a couple of years. Quit? No, he fired me on account of my heavy expense accounts.

Levy wasn't too old to be at 2308 Lispenard street every day from eight o'clock in the morning to five o'clock at night, in order to personally supervise the inside people. There was a stout, wooden box nailed to the wall of the shipping and receiving clerk's quarters, and Levy would stand by and watch the men opening cases and would make sure that every nail that was pulled out was subsequently deposited in this box. Many a time I've seen Levy take the nail-puller and show a new hand how to extract "ten-pennies" without bending 'em. Same way with string, too; every stray bit had to be coiled into convenient shape and placed in another box behind the counter.

From this it must not be inferred that Levy was parsimonious. Not by a long shot! The day he hired me he took me out to a four-dollar dinner with two-bit cigars. Of course, I remember him telling me at dinner that he had been in business twenty-seven years and had never bought a pound of nails or a ball of jute!

And he sure could audit an expense account! I will admit I stretched things a bit once in a while, when making up my voucher. A fellow has a lot of perfectly legitimate expenses while on the road that don't look so legitimate on paper. F'rinstance, I used to let Bill Stagg, of Rochester, trim me for ten dollars at poker and then I'd sell him a two thousand dollar bill of goods that meant four hundred profit for Levy. Of course, I couldn't show "Poker losses—ten dollars" on my voucher, so I used to squeeze as much as I could in on other items and stand a personal loss on the rest. When I see people smirk and raise their eyebrows knowingly at the mention of sales-

men's "expenses," I always pity 'em. It ain't a question of how much you can make; but how much that you've spent can you get back?

I don't mind admitting that the row with Levy about expense would never have occurred if it wasn't for Mabel. Mabel was an orphan and had been brought up by her Uncle Fred Tucker. You know, "Tucker's Ladies' Department Store" in Queen City? Mabel was his office manager at a salary of about nothin' a week. Tucker figured that he was entitled to her services free, gratis, for nothing, as long as she lived, on the strength of two hundred dollars he had advanced her to go to a business school. Not even his worst enemy would ever accuse Tucker of bein' a spendthrift.

I met Mabel on my first trip to Tucker's, and Uncle Fred didn't discourage our friendship, figurin' he could probably turn it to account when buying from me. I did sell him a couple of lots pretty low, at that. Well, Mabel and I wanted to get married after a while, and I hadn't never saved a nickel, so I got busy. That's why I did my durndest to squeeze every penny in on my expense account.

It must have been right after my sixth or seventh up-state trip that I staggered Levy when I turned my voucher over to him for his O. K. before handing it in to the cashier. I fell down hard in not giving him my orders first, 'cause I sure had a stack. He looked over the expense items and started to frown. Then his bald head started to shake a dubious negative and he kept moistening his lips. Finally he spoke.

"Mr. Brandon, you shouldn't play me for a sucker. Every day you got it on here cigars. Why can't you buy cigars by the box and took them mit you? It costs cheaper. Und a taxi to the Seminole Hotel! It's only seven minutes' walk. Four dollars a day for room *und* bath, and three dollars a day for a show room. At the Gatler Hotel you could get it a room for three dollars, including a bath. At the Gatler you could get it a show room for two dollars. You would safe newspaper money, too; every morning under your door they push a newspaper, free! Nu, why should you play me for a sucker?"

You can just bet I went right back at him. I explained that the psychological effect of buying a cigar for a customer and paying out money for it in his presence was much more impressive than offering a cigar of doubtful origin from the recesses of a cigar case. I told him that it was raining when I hit Queen City; that I was loaded down with two sample cases and simply had to take a taxi. I assured him that the only reason for my staying at the Seminole was because all the other salesmen in my line stopped there, and I would lose prestige if I stopped at the cheaper place. But Levy seemed unimpressed.

"Mr. Levy," I concluded, "every penny on that voucher has been expended in your behalf. You always get the benefit of every cent I spend. Just remember that. I sometimes wish some one else had to eat the indigestible meals, smoke the heavy cigars and sit through the bum shows that I can't escape from, just because I've got to sell your goods at top prices. Look at the orders I brought in."

He looked over the orders and tried his best not to show how pleased he was. Then he pursed his lips, marked "O. K. A. Levy" on the expense voucher with an indelible pencil and handed the voucher over to me.

"Mebbe you are right, Brandon," he said, not unkindly. "I wish all my young men was like you. But, *please* go easy on the expenses when you can. Remember, I belief you when you say every cent you spend is to my benefit. I hope that will always be so. Some day I will show you how I appreciate it. I will gif you a chance you should jump at like a hungry bull to a haystack."

I was used to that one; he fed it to all of us. I kinda liked the old guy, though.

He had always treated me white, and I never had to ask him for a salary increase. Of course, he never gave me a raise except when Burnham and Todd would put in a bid for my services. Somehow he always seemed to sense it, and along would come a raise that just about met their figure. Then, too, he always paid his people when they were sick, and he remembered every one right down to the office boy at Christmas.

The next up-state trip I ran across Jim Reynolds in Queen City. Jim is Burnham and Todd's star salesman, and he sure is a wiz! In his day he has sold everything—shoes, canned goods, cigars, jewelry, cut glass, and now he's selling cloaks and suits. Reynolds is a living rebuttal of the theory that a man has to have exact knowledge of the thing he's selling, the evolution of the article and all that technical bunk. All that Jim needs to know about a commodity is the bottom price and he'll take orders.

"Hello, Al," said Jim. "Business—or Mabel?" Meaning why was I in Queen City.

"Both," I grinned.

"Anything doin' to-night?"

"Nope."

He looked pleased, and produced a notebook from his inside coat pocket.

"I think I know a jane or two in this burg. What say you to a little dinner and a show for four?" and he began skimming over the pages of the notebook, which evidently contained names and addresses.

I hesitated. Shows and dinners didn't fit in with my plans to save money. On the other hand, my trips to Queen City, so far as Mabel was concerned, consisted of nothing more expensive than running out to her uncle's home on Delaware avenue and playing that old-fashioned indoor sport of holding down a sofa under an amber-shaded electrolier. To be sure, I kicked in with flowers or candy occasionally, but those things never set me back to any extent. So I decided that a little splurge wouldn't hurt and mebbe Reynolds would be lookin' the right way when the bill was presented. Burnham and Todd don't audit expense accounts the way Levy does.

"I'm with you," I decided.

"Stayin' at the Seminole?" asks Jim.

"No—Gatler."

"Too bad. Well, we'll eat before the show at the Seminole."

That suited me. If he was stoppin' there it sorta made him the host, didn't it? But the next one he pulled kinda broke me up.

"You get tickets for the Teck Theatre at your hotel, will you?" he says.

"S-s-sure," I answers. Eight dollars right off the bat.

He says as how he's got the names of a couple o' frails in his book, and he'll fix it up to have one of 'em at the Seminole at six-thirty, and I'm to arrange to have Mabel there, which I does. And, believe me, Mabel's some game kid! She put up an awful howl about the expense of the little jamboree.

"Eight dollars for theatre tickets!" she gasped, and opened her blue eyes until they looked the size of quarters. "Why, that would buy a kitchen table!"

I told her not to worry about that, because she certainly did seem pleased, aside from the expense. So at six-thirty we showed up at the Seminole, where we found Jim with a nice girl that he had met a couple o' years ago when he was selling artics and rubbers. There ain't no sense in my tellin' all about the dinner; it's just the clams that has anything to do with the story.

You see, it turned out that we all liked clams, so we started off with 'em. On the half-shell. I was lookin' over at Mabel, sitting there so nice and pink and smiley, when I noticed there was something wrong. She laid down her fork and looked sorter bewildered, and then she put her napkin up to her lips.

"Toothache?" inquires Reynolds.

"Bone?" I inquired.

She was some confused and blushed a lot and put down the napkin. There was a little white object on it.

"I guess it's a pearl," she said, and handed the object over to Fannie, Jim's friend.

"Looks like a dumb-bell," said Fannie, handin' it to me.

It did, too. There were two things about the size and shape of peas, connected by a little, narrow strip. I handed it over to Reynolds.

"What d'ye think?" I asked.

Jim looked at it thoughtfully.

"'Tain't any good," he said, finally. "I've heard of pearls bein' found in oysters, but no one ever heard of a pearl in a clam. Besides, it ain't got any orient."

"What is 'orient'?" asked Fannie, and Jim was tickled, 'cause he likes to air his knowledge. I think I told you that he once sold jewelry.

"The 'orient' is the lustre of a pearl," Jim declared. "Now, this thing ain't got any lustre; it's chalky white. Even if it was a pearl or a couple of pearls it wouldn't be worth anything, because it's full of flaws. You can see black coming through both of those things, all over. It's bum color. If it was a real twinned pearl it would be worth a lot."

"Keep it for a souvenir," commanded Mabel, so I put it in my vest pocket.

Well, I'll skip the soup (which was chicken okra), and the fish (Lake Erie white-fish, broiled), and the roast (Vermont turkey) and all the rest of the things includin' the blanc mange which the waiter called "Blomonge," and I'll get down to the check. I was figurin' on skippin' the check, too, but the cards was stacked.

"Did you sell Tucker?" Jim wanted to know.

"Twenty-four hundred dollars," I answered proudly.

"Fine!" he smiled. "Levy buys the dinners, then. Waiter, give Mr. Brandon the check!"

That wasn't the way I had doped it out, but I couldn't be cheap in front of the girls, could I? Of course I couldn't, so I dug down in my jeans to the extent of $12.20 and a dollar tip.

Then we went to the show, after which we took our girls home, and I didn't see Reynolds again until the next morning.

"There's a little matter of twenty dollars I'd like to see you about, Jim," I began. "Gonna split it with me?"

"Nix on the split. Put it in your expense account."

"But Levy don't—"

"Bother Levy," grinned Reynolds. "It's time the old tight-wad loosened up a bit. Have you got that freakish dumb-bell pearl?"

I had wrapped it up in a bit of tissue paper and tucked it in my vest pocket, so I told him I still had it.

"All right," said Reynolds. "Now, listen to me. Hold on to it. I'm leaving for the city on the nine o'clock train to-night. I suppose you'll be going back in a day or so, too. Well, you put the little theatre party and dinners in your expense account. I'll see Levy to-morrow or the next day, and, believe me, he'll pass your voucher. Be sure and have the near-pearl with you when you approach him, though. It'll be a cinch, if I know Levy. If he don't O. K. your voucher, I'll come across with my half."

Jim always was a persuasive sort of gink, so it wasn't surprisin' that I fell for the scheme. I kinda thought I knew what he meant to do, and as the thing turned out I guessed right.

About three days later I strolled into 2308 Lispenard street, hung up my coat and hat, put the sample case on the floor and fixed up my orders and expenses. Then I went into Levy's office and, after the usual preliminary greetings, I gave him the voucher.

"Pretty high expenses, Mr. Brandon, eh?" he commented, as he lamped it. "Now—this item for entertainment—what is that?"

"Show and dinners for four," I answered, nonchalantly.

"Uh-huh," he says. "What did that sell?"

"Twenty-four hundred to Tucker," I answered.

"You don't mean Fred Tucker went to the show mit you?" asked Levy, registering surprise. "When I was yet a salesman he couldn't be tooken, anywhere!"

"Not Tucker, exactly," I answered, carelessly. "His niece—and some friends of hers. She runs his office."

"So leetle Mabel is growed up," murmurs Levy, reflectively. "A nice leetle girl, Brandon—a fine business girl, ain't it?"

I admitted it.

"Of course I will O. K. the expenses," Levy declared, "even if they are a leetle high. I will do that because you gave me your word some time ago that I always get the benefit of every cent of expense money you spend. Ain't that so?"

"Sure," I responded, and Levy put his John Hancock across the face of the voucher. Then, just as he was about to hand it to me, he hesitated.

"Mr. Brandon," he observed, "I understand that in Queen City at the little dinner party one of your guests found a twinned pearl. I haf approved your expense account. The pearl belongs to me. Please gif it over."

Just as I had figured it out! Reynolds knew Levy well, knew his aversion to being "played for a sucker," knew his watch-dog trait of guarding the cash account. So Reynolds had stirred Levy's cupidity by placing a fabulous value on the chalky near-pearl, and the old boy had swallowed the story, hook, line and sinker!

For the sake of appearances I had to put up a holler, but after a while I admitted that since he was payin' the expenses the pearl was undoubtedly his property.

"Of course," I told him, "I can't rightly say what it's worth. It may be valueless, and then again it may be worth several hundred."

"You should worry," said Levy, grimly. "I take all the chances." So I handed over the dumb-bell.

That's all of the pearl episode for a while. Then I went out on the Jersey and Pennsylvania trip, and on my return I felt a little bit uncertain about how the boss was goin' to act. I doped it out that he had sure found out how he'd been stung and wouldn't be in any genial humor. I took a chance, though, and put in a pretty stiff voucher. Levy only glanced at the total and approved it. He did it so carelessly it made me anxious, and all the next week while I was up in my Hudson River territory I kept thinkin' about it.

When I got back to the office I had plenty of nerve with me. I handed in a voucher that would ordinarily have knocked Levy cold. Extras, you know, and a lot of small items that were due me in the past, but that I'd never been able to squeeze in. Levy O. K.'d it without battin' an eye. Then I was sure *I'd* been played for a sucker!

At lunch time I ran into Reynolds over at the Wool Club. I confided my suspicions to him and questioned him minutely regarding his knowledge of pearls. As I suspected, he knew no more about 'em than I do about fabricated steel.

"Of course, I may be wrong, Al.," admitted Jim, "but from what I know of the bloomin' tear-drops, the dumb-bell ain't worth a tinker's dam. I know a guy down in Maiden Lane, though, who ought to know all about 'em. We'll meander down after lunch and look him up."

We did. This friend of Jim's was with a big jewelry concern and seemed to know his business. It struck me, though, that Jim didn't recommend the pearl very powerfully when he described it, but the fellow nodded and seemed to get the low-down on the freak right off the bat.

"It's a twinned clam-pearl," he announced. "Creations similar to pearls in construction are occasionally found in the common oyster or clam. Though entirely devoid of nacre and the pearly texture they are often remarkable for perfection of shape and smoothness of skin. The clam-pearl you have described is only infrequently encountered with the twinned feature. Two round pearls grow side by side in the shell until they almost touch, and are developed by succeeding deposits of a substance resembling nacre, which eventually hardens. As a curiosity your twinned pearl may be worth a couple of dollars, but no pearl taken from an edible oyster or clam is of any value to the jeweler."

This fellow spoke with high-brow authority, so my mind was some relieved. I didn't quite relish the idea of handin' over to Levy somethin' that was worth a couple of hundred, but now I knew I could quit worryin'. Still, it wasn't like Levy to be played for a sucker!

Right through October and November things went on in the same way. Whenever I came in from a trip Levy would carelessly approve my expenses. It sure did get my goat, and I used to talk it over with Mabel whenever I hit Queen City. Mabel did my bankin' for me, and she'd get out the pass-book and show me how much I'd saved.

"Don't be a goose," she'd say. "Mr. Levy probably realizes what a good salesman you are, and has decided to be more liberal in the matter of expenses."

Just about that time we'd dig out a few catalogues we had from furniture houses (I knew a couple o' road-agents in that line and was figurin' on gettin' stuff at wholesale prices) and we'd start furnishin' an imaginary apartment. As we reckoned it out I had coin enough to furnish four of the five rooms we wanted. I had almost enough for the fifth room, too, but I intended to slip Mabel a solitaire for Christmas. You couldn't expect a girl to get hitched before you gave her an engagement ring, could you? Of course not!

On the seventeenth of December I got a telegram from Levy at Schenectady, askin' me to come right in to headquarters. I strolled in leisurely enough on the eighteenth and found him in his private office.

"Sit down, Mr. Brandon," he commanded. "Have a segar. I buy 'em by the box, not over the counter," he added maliciously as I accepted a perfecto.

"Mr. Brandon," he began deliberately, "I haf made up my mind to gif up the New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Hudson River and Great Lakes territory."

It was like a bomb-shell exploding.

"But—Mr. Levy," I protested, "it's *my* territory—it's your best-paying proposition!"

"Mebbe—mebbe not," he declared slowly. "Anyway I gif it up. I ain't so young like I used to be and I haf plenty to look after mit the rest of the business."

"Wh——what territory are you goin' to give me?" I inquired anxiously. A salesman's customers are his assets, you know, and I had most of my trade down pat."

"I haf nothing else for you," he informed me bluntly.

This was hittin' back with a vengeance. It was just like Shylock to demand his pound of flesh the week before Christmas. And me arrangin' to be married right after New Year's!

I made up my mind not to let him see how it hurt.

"Oh, very well," I said careless-like. "I'll fix up my expenses and settle with the cashier." I forced a yawn and started to leave the office.

"One moment, Mr. Brandon," said Levy. "There is something due you besides your expenses and salary. I haf decided to follow the exact plan of last year in remembering the boys for Christmas. One per cent of the gross sales for each salesman."

Oh, boy! Just what I had been figurin'

on. One per cent of sixty-four thousand was six hundred and forty dollars! I awaited his next words breathlessly.

"Even if you must quit as salesman it would not be fair to forget you."

Levy paused. I tried to keep my face from slippin', but I just couldn't help smilin' in anticipation. Pretty white of the old boy!

"You haf brought in more business than any of the others," continued Levy. "Of course," he added thoughtfully, "your expenses were high, but you did sell the trade. So, Mr. Brandon, to show my appreciation I am going to do a little better by you than by the others. I am going to gif you—this!" and he took a little white box from his desk and handed it over to me.

I almost had tears in my eyes as I muttered "Thanks" and rushed out of the office with the little white box, ignorin' his offer to shake hands. It took me ten minutes to straighten my account with the cashier and twenty-five minutes more to reach Hoboken and catch the next train to Queen City.

Sure, I didn't even open the box—just crammed it in my pocket. What was the use? I was just as sure of what was inside as you are now. Yes, I suppose I deserved it, but it did come at an inopportune time, and it made me feel blue.

I reached Queen City early the next morning, and between gettin' a shave, a shine and a breakfast, I managed to kill time waiting for Tucker's to open. I was almost ashamed to see Mabel, and still I felt that I just had to. Sympathy was what I wanted, I guess, and I sure did hit the right address.

I met Mabel as she was goin' in the store and trotted up to the office on the second floor with her. Straight off the griddle I told her about losin' my job. And did her eyes fill with tears? Yes they did—not! She smiled confidently and said, "Burnham and Todd will give you a job, won't they?"

"Yes, I guess so, but you don't seem to understand. We were to get married in January, and now—"

"Well, we can, can't we?"

"But I haven't all the money we need."

"Of course you have, Al."

"Not if I'm going to give you a ring for Christmas."

"Why, Al," she said, wide-eyed, "we've never even discussed an engagement ring. It's not at all necessary. Surely you weren't figuring—"

"Oh, yes, I was," I interrupted. "I was bankin' on the little Christmas bonus Levy usually hands out."

"And did he forget you entirely this year?" she asked sympathetically.

"No, not entirely," I answered bitterly. "He said he was going to hand out one per cent of the gross sales to the boys, but that he had determined to do a little better by me. Then he gave me—this!"

I took the little white box from my pocket and laid it on her desk.

"What is it?" she inquired.

I couldn't help grinning.

"Not—the pearl?" she gasped.

I nodded.

Mabel didn't know whether to laugh or cry, but she must have doped it out that a good laugh was required, 'cause she rippled away until the tears rolled down her cheeks leavin' their mark in the rice powder.

"Rich, ain't it?" I said.

"Oh, Al," she panted, between laughs, "it's too funny for words."

"Not so's you can notice it," I answered. "I don't know where the solitaire is comin' from, nor any other ring, unless you'd like a twinned pearl!"

She quieted down a bit, but her face was fairly aglow with happiness.

"To be sure," she decided. "It's a talisman. If it wasn't for the pearl you wouldn't have been able to save all that money, with the expense vouchers and everything. It has meant good luck for us; let's have it set and I'll wear it as an engagement ring."

Ain't that gameness for you? I reckon that's pullin' the rainbow right out of the clouds!

"I didn't even open the box," I told her.

"Then you can't be sure of what's in it," she said, and proceeded to open it.

It was the pearl, all right, and in the bottom of the box was a piece of one of Levy's business cards, cut to fit. And what do you s'pose he had written on it? Just this:

"Skin me, will you?

"I never play nobody for a sucker."

Say, I was wild when I saw that! But Mabel was calm. She looked at the card a second time and then at the pearl, and grew thoughtful. Then she picked up the telephone on her desk and asked the store operator for Mr. Walters.

"This is Miss Tucker," she said, when he answered. "Can you come up for a moment?"

Then she hung up the receiver and pretty soon a tall, thin guy got off the elevator and walked briskly into the office.

"Al," announced Mabel, "this is Mr. Walters of the jewelry department. Mr. Walters, meet Mr. Brandon."

We shook hands and Walters grinned genially.

"I've heard of you, Mr. Brandon," he said. "Congratulations."

Which makes me get red right up to the ears.

"Mr. Walters, I'd like you to look at this and tell me if it has any value," requested Mabel, handin' him the pearl, box, card and all.

That guy Walters should have been a detective. He never missed a thing. First he read the note on the card. Then he took the pearl and rolled it on the desk.

"Nice and round," he announced.

After that he laid the skirt of his coat on the desk and put the pearl on it. It showed up fine against the dark background. Then he switched on the light over the desk, took a little microscope from his vestpocket and examined the pearl minutely. Finally he cleared his throat.

"A-hem," he said. "Of course, it's a clam pearl, and, theoretically, it has no value. However, I must modify that statement because of two things. First, it is a twinned clam pearl, which greatly enhances its value. Secondly, I fancy the color is good. Clam pearls are usually purplish-red or blue. Sometimes they are dark enough to appear black. When the color is very dark and the skin uncommonly good they have been sold for black pearls, and single ones have brought as high as a hundred dollars. I should say a twinned pearl of this size might bring three or four hundred. I don't know who wrote this note, but the advice is sound."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"It says 'Skin me, will you?'" he answered. "That is often done in the hope of encountering better orient underneath. You have, perhaps, noted a sort of metallic black showing through the skin. I have an idea that if this is skinned the under surface will show considerable black and perhaps some vestige of orient. In that event, you could probably dispose of it."

Mabel looked at me and I looked at her, and we both grinned.

"Can you have it skinned?" I asked him.

"Surely," Walters answered.

"And where could I sell it?" I inquired.

"You'd better do that in New York. Go to some unscrupulous dealer; he'll give you a fair price on it and then unload it on some unsuspecting customer as a real black twinned pearl."

I let Walters take the pearl with him. I was feeling a lot better by that time.

"Think of Levy givin' me a steer like that," I said to Mabel when Walters

had gone. "The old boy wasn't so bad after all. I can probably drag down enough for the pearl to get a diamond solitaire after all! Do you like Tiffany settings?"

Mabel flared up in a minute.

"Al Brandon, you'll do nothin' of the sort," she scolded. "It wouldn't be honest. Even though the dealer knows what he is buying, you'd be helping him to defraud some other person. We'll do just as I've suggested, have the pearl set in a ring for me."

And no amount of coaxin' could make her change her mind, either. We was arguin' fast and furious when a messenger boy showed up at Mabel's desk and said "Sign the book, please," handin' her a telegram. She signed and looked at the yellow envelope.

"It's for you, Al," she squealed, and *opened* it! Some girl, eh?

It took her some time to read it, because it was a night letter, as I saw when she passed it to me. All the time I was readin' it she held on to my arm, smilin' like a basket of chips.

It read like this:

"Mr. Al. Brandon,
c/o Tucker's Ladies' Dept. Store,
Queen City, New York.

Will open branch in Queen City first of year to handle Great Lakes and Hudson River territory. Will you consider inside management at four thousand per annum? You must keep salesmen's expenses low. Don't play me for a sucker.

ADOLF LEVY."

Whadd'ye know about that? Wasn't it just like Levy to know where to find me?—and to make it a night letter? Sure, I accepted. He's some white man—Levy! I'm runnin' the place to suit him, too. Why, I haven't bought a pound of nails or a ball of jute since we started!

We're livin' out on Delaware avenue, near the Park. Come out some time and see the twins. Pearls? Naw—these are real ones—Adolf and Jim.

How about the clam pearl? No, we didn't have it set in a ring. Levy made a suggestion and I followed it. I had it set in a scarfpin. You see, Jim Reynolds was my best man, and the scarfpin was the gift of the groom!"

WHERE THE LINES MEET

By FRANK X. FINNEGAN

THERE is a spot in the southwestern part of this country where a man may stand at one moment upon the soil of four states; where, if he moves but a step in either direction, he may be entirely within the boundaries of one commonwealth, with another lying beneath his eyes and the two others so close that his shadow, cast by the noonday sun, may fall on both of them. In all the broad expanse of the United States, with its hundreds of state lines crossing one another, there is no other place where this is possible. It was toward this spot that a man on a jaded cow-pony rode through a driving storm one April night. His broad-brimmed hat was pulled well down to protect his face from the beating rain and the reins hung loose upon the horse's drooping neck, for the cayuse knew the trail across the mesa better than its master in the blackness of the night.

To the rider's left the San Juan River, swollen to twice its normal width by the spring rains, roared and tumbled between its banks, and at times the horse splashed through a pool where the river had overflowed the trail, but the man paid little heed to the floundering footsteps of his horse and only pulled the collar of his rough coat more closely about his throat as he bowed before the increasing gale. At length the cayuse quickened its steps and raised its head as a twinkling light glimmered through the blackness far ahead. The man roused himself in sympathy with the livlier motion of his horse, the light caught his eye and with an oath he brought his rawhide quirt down on the horse's flank as he stared through the darkness.

The surprised cayuse bounded forward with renewed energy and in a few minutes stopped before a rough shack, through the window of which the light was gleaming. The man threw himself from the horse, bounded to the door and flung it open. In the single room of the cabin he saw a heavily-built, forbidding-looking man seated near a table, smoking and vainly trying by the light of the smoky lamp to read a soiled fragment of a month-old newspaper. He looked up when the door was burst open and surveyed the intruder calmly.

"Hello, Bill," he said after a moment, during which the two men had stared at each other. "I was waitin' for you."

"I see you was," said the man at the door, "an' you seem to be makin' yourself at home while you're waitin'." In his astonishment he had forgotten his horse and he took a step inside the shack as if to escape the drenching rain and the wind which was roaring up from the southwest. Then he remembered that he had not yet given the animal shelter and he paused.

"Wait till I put the horse up," he said. "I'll be back."

"Oh, I know you will, Bill," said the man at the table, lightly. "I ain't afraid you're goin' to run away."

The rain-soaked man at the door hesitated as though to speak again, started out, turned again toward the man at the table, who smilingly surveyed his every move, and at last stepped outside, closed

the door and led his tired horse to the lean-to behind the shack, where he tethered it for the night. By the time he had again reached the door of the cabin his features had undergone a decided change and the surly look of defiance with which he had first met the smiling face of the other man had given place to an expression almost equally cheerful. He closed the door of the shack carefully that the howling wind might not burst it open, crossed the room and seated himself on the edge of a tumbled bed near the western wall of the cabin. Watching the man near the table with a furtive smile he fished a blackened pipe from his pocket, rapped it on the edge of the bed, blew into it, and said:

"If you don't mind bein' obligin', I'd just as soon have a pipeful of that tobacco you're smokin'."

"Sure," said the man at the table, drawing out a greasy pouch. "Come an' take all you want."

The man on the bed eyed him narrowly a moment, knocked his pipe against his horny palm once or twice, and said:

"I'd rather you'd toss it over."

"What's the odds?" asked the man at the table, lightly, but he tossed the pouch over and his companion filled and lighted his pipe. When the blue clouds were adding their mite to the closeness of the atmosphere, the man at the table turned sharply to the man on the bed.

"Bill," he said, "I don't s'pose it'll take much talk from me to explain what I'm here for. I been lookin' for you for a month all over Montezuma County, an' I said to the boys I wouldn't come back without you. I sort of lost track of you for a spell until a cow puncher up near M'Elmo told me you had built this shack down here near the San Juan an' I come right on here to get you. Not findin' you at home, I made myself comfortable, knowin' you'd come sooner or later. Do you want me to tell you what I come for?"

"Sure," said Bill. "I know I never sent for you, Tom M'Kinney, an' I'd get along here powerful comfortable for a long time if you didn't make it no point to drop in on me."

"Well, maybe so," admitted McKinney, slowly; "but you see, Bill, my comin' ain't what the folks in the states refer to as a social call. It's more connected with business, you know, Bill, seein' as how I've got in my pocket a warrant for the arrest of one Bill Gordon for the crime of horse stealin', contrary to the peace an' order of Montezuma County, Colorado. I reckon you won't deny that you're Bill Gordon, leastways not to me, that has knowed you for twelve years, an' I don't expect you're going to cut up rough about it, because you've knowed me the same length of time."

Bill Gordon smoked thoughtfully a few moments, with the shadow of a smile on his features.

"No, Tom," he said at length, "I ain't goin' to deny that I'm Bill Gordon, but I'm sorry that you've come all this way in such bad weather just to tell me that, because you'll have to leave your warrant in your pocket an' go back without me."

The smile vanished from McKinney's face, giving way to a fierce glare which no whit dismayed the complacent Bill Gordon.

"I'll have to go back without you?" repeated McKinney. "Don't you reco'nize me as the sheriff of Montezuma County, State of Colorado?"

"Surely," said Gordon calmly, blowing a big cloud of smoke into the air.

"Then I place you under arrest," thundered McKinney, rising with a hand upon the butt of his revolver as though in expectation of resistance.

Bill Gordon still continued to sit on the edge of the bed and smoke, and he even smiled at the warlike move of the sheriff.

"No, you don't place me under no arrest, neither," he finally declared, looking fearlessly into the sheriff's eyes.

"Why don't I?" asked the surprised

McKinney. Resistance he was ready for but this calm and unmoved refusal of Bill Gordon to be arrested staggered him.

"Because," answered Gordon, with a final smile of triumph, "I ain't in Colorado!"

"You ain't *what?*" thundered the sheriff.

"I ain't in Colorado," repeated Gordon, with the same calm smile of assurance. "You are," he went on hastily, seeing that McKinney evidently thought he was insane, "but I ain't. You see, the line runs right through my shack. Bed's in Utah, chair is in Colorado. That nail keg over there is in Arizony, and that old saddle in the other corner's in New Mexico. I'm on the bed, so I'm in Utah, an' you can't serve no warrant in Utah, Tom. You'll admit that?"

"Sure, I admit that," said Sheriff McKinney in a dazed and uncertain way.

"Well, then," continued the imperturbable Gordon, "your warrant ain't no good. All I've got to do is to stay over here in Utah an' you can't touch me."

"But—but how'd you know where the line was?" demanded the sheriff suspiciously. He had recovered from the first shock of surprise and was preparing for fight again. "How do I know this ain't a game you're putting up on me? I'd make a fine figure goin' back to M'Elmo with a yarn like that, wouldn't I? I'd be run out of town before I could resign."

"Lemme tell you about it," said Gordon, stretching himself comfortably on the bed. He was no longer in fear of the sheriff's warrant and was eager to expatiate upon his great scheme. "I seen it all set out in a newspaper about a month ago about this here place. I was up to Monticello, up here on the Utah side, you know, an' I found a newspaper kickin' around here what had all this in it. It told how the state lines of Colorado an' Utah an' Arizony an' New Mexico all come together in a bunch an' how four cowboys could sit on their horses an' hold hands an' all be in different states. An' it went on about how the cowboys had built up a pile of stones to mark the spot where all the four lines come together, an' it had a picture of the pile of stones an' four men on horses all holdin' hands."

Bill paused to refill his pipe from the pouch which still lay beside him, and as he did so he was reminded of the incident of the evening.

"That's why I wanted you to toss me your tobacco," he said with a smile. "I didn't want to take a chance in Colorado for a minute."

"I wish I had knowed it then," grunted the sheriff. "I mightn't have been so obligin'."

"Well, I got to thinkin' about that thing," went on Gordon when the pipe was well alight, "an' I got to wonderin' if that wouldn't be a handy place to live. You know, lots of fellows build their shacks on the line between two states, because they may not want to stay in one state all the time. There is occasion when many a man wants to move along a little an' if he can do it by movin' across the room it saves lots of travelin'. But, thinks I, s'posing a fellow has two visitors at once that wants to have a little chat with him, one from each state? Then what? thinks I. An' it struck me that if a fellow could live in about four states—not more than four—it might often come handy."

"There ain't no manner of doubt," interrupted Sheriff McKinney, "that it would for you, Bill."

"I thought about that thing so much," went on Gordon, "that I came down here lookin' for that there pile of stones. An' I found 'em an' this here is the place. I built this shack around that pile of stones just as square as them fellows that lays out the railroad lines could make it. I took down the pile of stones because they was in the way, but this is the place, Tom, an' you can take my word for it. The bed's in Utah, the chair's in Colorado, the keg's in Arizony an' the

saddle over there's in New Mexico. When I want to leave Colorado for a spell I mosey over an' sit on the nail keg in Arizony an' I go to bed in Utah every night I'm at home. You can see for yourself, Tom," concluded Gordon with the utmost good-nature, "that the scheme ain't a bad one; as, for example, right at present."

"No, it ain't a bad one," assented the sheriff, "only there's this about it, Bill, you can't stay over there in Utah forever, you know. S'posing I was to hang around here until you got hungry an' wanted to get up a snack o' sunthin' to eat for yourself, you'd have to come over into Colorado to eat it an' then I'd nab you. You can't live on the bed, you know. Did think of that?"

"Sure," said Gordon, with a quiet smile. "You see this window? It's on the Utah side of the house. I can go out this window an' go around to the corral an' get my horse without ever leavin' Utah, an' I can ride from there up into Utah or down into Arizony or around the front of the house into New Mexico an' you can't lay a hand on me, Tom. I can keep in one o' them places, you know, until you get tired an' go home. Oh, I've got it all thought out."

The Colorado sheriff was silent for a few minutes, wrapped in deep thought on the perplexing problem with which he was face to face. The storm still raged with unabated fury, the rain beat upon the flimsy roof of the cabin and the wind roared around the door and windows. Bill Gordon smoked steadily and regarded the sheriff with satisfied amusement until both men were startled by a hail from without.

"Hello, the house!" called a stentorian voice above the storm. Bill Gordon looked uneasily at the sheriff.

"'Pears like there's somebody out there in the rain," said McKinney.

"I ain't lookin' for no visitors," answered Gordon. "This ain't no hotel."

The calls from without were repated and finally succeeded by a sturdy rapping on the door of the shack. Gordon arose reluctantly, being careful not to cross the line passing through the centre of the little cabin, and unfastened the door. In a gust of wind and rain two bedraggled men stepped inside. Coming out of the pitchy darkness of the stormy night, they were dazzled for a moment by the lamplight and peered around the shack with winking eyes. Gordon took advantage of the circumstances to slip over into the corner and seat himself on the nail keg.

"Hello, Tom," cried one of the newcomers in surprise as he made out the features of the Colorado sheriff in the lamplight; "what you doin' here? We expected to find Bill Gordon. You waitin' for him too?"

"There's Bill, in the corner," replied Sheriff McKinney, and the two strangers turned in the direction indicated. Gordon was rocking himself lightly to and fro on the nail keg, still enjoying his smoke and with the same inscrutible smile on his features with which he had regaled the Colorado sheriff before acquainting him with his novel scheme for evading the law.

"Evenin', Jack," he said as the two turned toward him; "evenin', Buck. What brings you folks this way? Nothin' goin' wrong, is there?"

"Well, I'll put up our horses while Jack tells you about it," said the man addressed as Buck, and he disappeared into the rain again. Jack looked rather awkwardly from one to the other of the men as though he did not exactly relish the situation in which he found himself.

"Before I say anything more," he began, addressing himself to Sheriff McKinney, "I want to know if Bill here is your prisoner. You got here first an' of course, if he's under arrest, he's yours, an' we ain't got anything more to say."

"Well, no," said Sheriff McKenney; "to tell the truth, he ain't my prisoner."

"Good," said the drenched newcomer;

"then we ain't had our trip for nothin'."

At that moment the man who had gone out to care for the horses returned and Jack greeted him gleefully.

"It's all right, Buck," he said. "Sheriff M'Kinney says he hasn't arrested Bill; so one of us is sure to get him. You can take him if you want, because I know I can get him when you're through with him. Bill," he continued, turning to Gordon, who was listening with the same bored smile on his face, "I've got a warrant for you for runnin' off Dad Walters's three colts, and Buck here has got another warrant for you for a case down in his county. Now, we both been lookin' for you for a long time an' when we heard you was located in a shack down here, we decided to come after you together. Here you are an' here we are, an' I don't s'pose you're going to make any fuss about it, are you, Bill?"

"No, I ain't goin' to make any fuss about it," said Gordon, with a sly wink at Sheriff McKinney; "only I ain't goin' with any of you."

"You ain't?" repeated Jack fiercely, laying his hand upon a ponderous weapon. "We'll see about that!"

"Wait a minute, Jack," said Gordon in a soothing tone; "take it easy. You're sheriff of San Juan County, Utah, ain't you?"

"Certainly I am," replied Jack impatiently.

"An' Buck there is sheriff of San Juan County, New Mexico, ain't he?" went on Gordon.

"Oh, we all know that," said Buck, starting forward. "Let's stop this foolishness."

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," warned Gordon, while McKinney industriously cleaned his pipe. "Now, neither one of you two sheriffs thought he had any right to serve warrants in Arizony, did you?"

"Arizona!" exclaimed Jack. "What are you talking about?"

"Only this, said Gordon, settling back against the wall, "that I'm in Arizony. Ask M'Kinney. He knows about it. Bed's in Utah, chair's in Colorado, keg's in Arizony and saddle's in New Mexico."

"What's all this about?" demanded the Utah sheriff, turning to the Colorado sheriff.

"I guess Bill's right," said Sheriff McKinney, "if he's tellin' the truth, an' I ain't got much reason to doubt that. We all know the state lines all cross down here somewheres, and Bill allows this is the spot. He found the pile of stones the fellows put up to mark it an' he built his shack around 'em. I guess he's got the best of it while he stays on the nail keg."

The two outwitted sheriffs glared at Gordon, at McKinney and at each other in turn, and in the silence the storm could be heard roaring with redoubled fury. At length the New Mexico sheriff started impatiently.

"This is all nonsense," he said, sternly. "Here we are, three sheriffs, each with a warrant for this fellow. Any one of us can arrest him by main force. Are we all going to be bluffed by this yarn about the state lines?"

"You wouldn't want to do an illegal act like that, Buck," ventured Gordon, winningly; "not you, Buck, in front of two witnesses. You know if you dragged me out of Arizony, where I'm sittin' so comfortable, an' took me away off into New Mexico, I could summons these two reputable officers to testify about it, Buck, an' they'd have to tell the truth, you know, about how you served your warrant outside your own state. It wouldn't do, you know, Buck," concluded Gordon, with exasperating impudence.. The three sheriffs looked at one another in silence once more.

"No, I guess he's got us stalled," said Buck, at last, and Jack and McKinney solemnly shook their heads.

"I suppose we could stay here an' starve him out," suggested Jack. "He'd have to come out of Arizona some time."

"I want to get back when court opens to-morrow," said McKinney. "I've fooled away three weeks on this thing now."

"We might—" began Buck, when something happened. The howling blast struck the light shack with tremendous force, tore it from the earth and poised it on end for an instant, then hurled it to the north and east. The men fell in a heap with the table and the bed had his eye on Gordon at the instant of on top of them, but Sheriff McKinney the upheaval and had his hands on him as they all lay, half-stunned, in the wreckage.

"Bill," he breathed hoarsely into Gordon's ear, "we're in Colorado now. You're my prisoner!"

AMOS HOPSTONE

By ELLIS PARKER BUTLER

THROUGH my profession of genealogist I have met many strange persons, but Amos Hopstone was the first to come to me to satisfy the cravings of an unsatisfied vengeance. The moment he mentioned his name I turned to the H drawer in my card index. "Hopstone, Amos," I read there. "The last of the Hopstones. The entire line, except Amos, killed in the famous Gibsmith-Hopstone feud," etc.

"Well, Mr. Hopstone," I said, turning to him, "what can I do for you?"

I cannot give an adequate idea of the horrid appearance of Amos Hopstone. This man who, with his own hand, had killed twenty-seven Gibsmiths bore all the marks of an unutterable villain. His coat hitched up in the back where it caught on the handles of two immense pistols, and a strange protuberance on his leg was caused by the handle of a bowie knife carried in his boot. His long mustaches drooped on either side of his mouth, and his jet black hair fell loosely from under an old slouch hat. His eyes glittered savagely.

"Maybe you can do something for me, and maybe you can't," he said, harshly. "I'm Amos Hopstone, and I'm the man that killed twenty-seven Gibsmiths in twenty-six days. That's one a day and one over, but it ain't the record. Old Sime Gibsmith killed twenty-nine Hopstones in twenty-six days. That's the record, but I'd have beat it if I hadn't run out of Gibsmiths. I thought, seeing how as keeping track of folks was your business, maybe you could look me up another batch of Gibsmiths."

"No," I said. "There are no more Gibsmiths. You killed them all."

"I reckoned so," said Amos Hopstone, with a smile that was half regret and half pride. "And that ain't all. I've used up all the Jimpfers—they was cousins to the Gibsmiths. I killed sixteen Jimpfers in twenty-two days. You can file the Jimpfers away with the dodo birds—they're extinct. And I've used up all the Ranbecks—they was second cousins to the Gibsmiths. And I've used up all the Newfiggs, and all the Pradles, and all the Hilums, and all the Nypers, and all the Doublegarths. I've stripped all them branches. Not a one left. What I want you to do is to look up some more branches. If I could get on the trail of a real hearty branch—one with thirty people in it, say—I'd have a try at old Sime Gibsmith's record. I'd try to kill the whole thirty in twenty-six days. Gibsmiths and relatives of Gibsmiths is poison to me!"

I did not much like the task proposed by Amos Hopstone. I disliked the idea of furnishing genealogical records merely that old Sime Gibsmith's killing record might be beaten. I told Amos Hopstone as much.

"All right, pardner," he said, "just forget that part of it. But you look like a man who would do thorough work when he took to it as a business."

"Mr. Hopstone," I said, "that is so. You are a man of discernment."

"That's right!" he declared. "I practiced discerning a long time, and I got so I could discern a Gibsmith or a Prad-

dle as far as I could see one, and I can shoot as far as I can discern. 'Discerning an' Thorough'—that's my motto. If I've killed off all the Gibsmiths and all their relatives, I'm satisfied, but if I haven't I don't call it a thorough job. I want to be thorough."

He drew from his coat-pocket a roll of paper and spread it on my desk.

"Here," he said, "is a list of all the Gibsmiths and all their branches as far back as the Revolutionary War, when Pete Gibsmith moved to Kaintucky. That's as far back as I can go alone. All I want you to do is to hunt up where Pete Gibsmith come from, and see if he had any sisters, and if any of them married into other families, and let me know, or if he had any brothers that—"

I stared at the name of Peter Gibsmith. After seeing that name, and the date of his birth, I would not have allowed Amos Hopstone to go to any other genealogist for anything in the world.

"Mr. Hopstone," I said, "I will undertake the research, but my usual charge for work of this character—"

"Now, Mr. Wilmot," he said, "that's one thing I wanted to talk to you about. I'm out of money. And up here in New York, where nobody knows me, it is hard to get a job. I thought maybe you could recommend me to a good job. I'd turn over to you every cent of my wages every Saturday night."

For reasons which you will soon understand I did not wish Amos Hopstone to get out of my sight, and I put my hand on his arm.

"Mr. Hopstone," I said, "I have the very place for you! I live in a boarding house, but only last night my neighbor, Edgar Smith, asked me if I knew of a strong, attractive gentleman to do the work on his place. You do not object to the—ah—to the music of a cornet?"

"I can stand it," said Amos Hopstone.

"Because," I said, modestly, "I often call at Mr. Edgar Smith's home and play the cornet there."

It was thus I placed Amos Hopstone in the home of Edgar Smith. My name is Samuel Wilmot, and I became acquainted with Edgar Smith through my professional duties. He came to me, in short, to have his genealogical tree dug up, and the acquaintance ripened into friendship rapidly, particularly as there was a most charming young lady in Mr. Smith's family—his sister, Kate Smith.

Mr. Smith was delighted to secure the services of Amos Hopstone. There was a great deal of work to be done about his place, and he had long wished to keep a horse, but his income was such that he could not afford to keep both a man and a maid servant, and he found it would be necessary to have either a maid who would also attend to the horse, or a man who would do the housework. Amos Hopstone readily agreed to this. Vengeance, as inculcated by the feudists of Kentucky, is an overwhelming passion and drowns all lighter considerations.

Amos Hopstone went about his new duties cheerfully. Whether he was in the stable currying the horse, or in the basement washing the clothes, or in the yard cutting the grass, or in the dining-room waiting on the table, he maintained a bright, optimistic demeanor, singing cheerfully or whistling. Mr. Smith sometimes wished Amos would not whistle while waiting on the table, but, after all, it is better to have a cheerful person about the house than a sulky one. He also tried to have Amos shave off his mustache, but the most he could persuade him to do was to curl the ends. When this was done and Amos donned his white apron with the nicely ruffled shoulder pieces he made a neat waiting-maid. Mr. Smith also tried to make Amos give up his pistols, because he looked strange wheeling the baby carriage with two great

pistol-butts protruding from his pockets, but in this he was unsuccessful.

From time to time Amos asked me to hurry up my researches a little. He said the job I had secured for him was a good job, but it annoyed him, while currying the horse, to have to strip off his overalls, rush to the house, curl his mustache, and put on his white apron to answer the doorbell, only to find it had been rung by a peddler selling patent self-heating hair-curlers. I told him I was proceeding as rapidly as possible, and thus two years passed. At the end of every week Amos Hopstone handed me his wages as he had agreed. His afternoons off he spent calmly cleaning his pistols and sharpening his bowie-knife.

As I have said, the Smith's home was brightened by the presence of a charming girl. She was full of life and vivacity, and an excellent performer on the mandolin, and while all the young men of the neighborhood admired her, she seemed to prefer me to any of them, because I am a cornetist in an amateur way. We often spent an evening together playing duets. It was, therefore, no surprise to Edgar Smith to hear that I had proposed to Kate, but it was a great shock to me when Edgar Smith absolutely forbade the marriage. And yet his reason was both simple and logical. While his decision almost broke my heart I could not blame him.

Mr. Smith's mother lived on a farm in New Hampshire, and my Grandfather Wilmot lived on the adjoining farm. For many years they were such good neighbors that when the pump on my Grandfather's farm broke down he did not take the trouble to repair it. Every evening he led his cow across Grandma Smith's dooryard to a small brook that ran through her farm, and there his cow took a cool, refreshing drink of water before retiring to rest. This brook water was slightly mineral, containing a little iron and a little sulphur, which gave it a peculiar taste, and the cow became so fond of this that she would drink no other water. Her calf inherited the taste, and so did that calf's calf. Thus it became absolutely necessary for Grandfather Wilmot and his cow to make the trip to the brook every evening, and in hot weather, when a cow is apt to be especially thirsty, every morning, too, but Grandma Smith did not care, for a brook is not apt to be emptied by the efforts of one cow.

But all this neighborly good feeling ended suddenly. The original cow died, and her calf grew to cowhood and died, and thus cow succeeded cow for many years, but at last a calf was born that had an ungovernable temper, and this calf took a dislike to a red dress with white spots that Grandma Smith wore. Whenever Grandma Smith was in her garden, this calf—now grown to be a cow—would break away from the hands of Grandpa Wilmot, who was growing feeble, and would chase Grandma Smith angrily. Several times she narrowly escaped with her life, and then she forbade Grandpa Wilmot the right of way to the brook, and thus it happened that at the very time I was pouring out my heart to Kate Smith on the cornet, and she was tremulously replying on the mandoling, Grandpa Wilmot and Grandma Smith were preparing to go to law about the cow-path.

Grandpa Wilmot contended that half a century of leading a cow and her progeny through a yard constituted a permanent right to the cow-path, but Grandma Smith held an exactly opposite view. She therefore took her rocking-chair to her side of the hole in the fence and sat there knitting, while Grandpa Wilmot took his rocking-chair to his side of the fence and sat there reading, holding the cow by the bridle and ready to lead her to water the moment Grandma Smith moved away from the fence. When Grandma Smith was away he hastily led the cow to water and back again, and

in this way the poor cow often secured enough water in one day to last for several days. Otherwise the poor cow would have died of thirst.

When Edgar Smith learned that my grandfather was acting in this manner he quite naturally refused to let me marry Kate Smith, knowing that nothing but quarrels would come of it, but we two young lovers were frightfully depressed. I spent whole days at my window, facing the Smith's home and playing mournful tunes on my cornet, and at times my sorrow caused my mouth to tremble so much that I could not lip the cornet, and my tune would die in a soul-racking wail. My Kate was so sad she could hardly nerve herself to jiggle back a tune on her mandolin. Even Amos Hopstone's callous heart was touched by my weeping cornet, and time and again he got out his pistols and aimed at me from behind a tree, but his hand trembled and he never shot at me.

The happiness of the Smith home was gone. Kate wept almost constantly, although her tears rusted her mandolin strings, and Edgar Smith was angry with both Grandfather Wilmot and myself. Even Amos Hopstone began to show ugliness. He seemed to think I should be digging up Gibsmiths instead of pouring out my sadness through the cornet. His clothes were now all in rags, and as he still gave me his wages at the end of each week he was obliged to sell his two pistols and his bowie-knife that he might buy garments.

Kate wrote many letters praying Grandma Smith to sell her farm and come to Westcote to live, but Grandma Smith absolutely refused. She said she meant to sit at the break in the fence until the case was decided in the courts, which—with the appeals—might be twenty years. At length Edgar Smith went to New Hampshire himself, and there, although it was midwinter, he found his mother wrapped in blankets, with a red knit hood on her head, but still sitting by the gap in the fence. Every five minutes her maid brought a hot brick from the house and put it under her feet, but the time passed slowly, for she could not knit with her hands in mittens. When Edgar Smith saw it was useless to argue with her he returned to New York and sent his mother a phonograph with which to lessen the tediousness of the days by the fence. But his thoughtful kindness was wasted, for after trying the phonograph a few times Grandma Smith put it away. She found it amused Grandfather Wilmot too, while she had all the trouble of winding it and putting on new records. All he had to do was sit and listen.

"Poor Kate!" said Mrs. Edgar Smith when she heard the result of her husband's journey. "The poor child is pining away!"

"No fault of mine!" said Mr. Smith. "That young fellow's grandfather is making all the trouble!"

"That is true," said Mrs. Smith, "but Kate is so sad. She has not touched her mandolin for a week, and whenever Samuel begins to play the cornet she puts cotton in her ears."

"So do I," said Mr. Smith.

I will now make a confession. For over a year I had been concealing from Edgar Smith and Amos Hopstone the fact that I had completed my labors on the genealogy of the one and of the other. True, I hated to take Amos Hopstone's wages week after week, and I may have had no right to withhold his genealogy of the Gibsmith's, but I thought I was doing it all for the best. Now, however, I was filled with rage against Edgar Smith and all his kith and kin. If I might not be happy, and the Smiths might not be happy, Amos Hopstone should, at least, be happy.

When I rang the doorbell at Edgar Smith's house Amos Hopstone answered

it. He was neatly dresed in a pair of cowhide boots, khaki trousers, blue cotton shirt and a waitress's apron with ruffles. The improvement wrought on that rough d i a m o n d by association with one of the best families of Westcote was apparent at a glance, for on top of his neatly brushed black hair he now wore a dainty cap with blue bows. He led me into the parlor.

"Amos Hopstone," I said, "I have good news for you. I have found the family connections of old Pete Gibsmith!"

Tears filled Amos Hopstone's eyes.

"Ah!" he cried with joy, "tell me the name, and I will exterminate it! Only whisper it in my ear and I will wipe it off the earth!"

"Smith!" I cried, watching his face. "The name is Smith!"

For a moment Amos Hopstone stared at me speechlessly. His mouth fell open so wide that I could almost see his inmost thoughts.

"Smith!" he muttered. "Smith! Why, there are thousands of Smiths! There's hundreds and thousands and hundreds of thousands of Smiths, and only one Hopstone left!" He began to weep. "I'm scared I won't last 'til all them Smiths is killed off."

"Courage! Courage, Amos Hopstone!" I cried. "Do not let mere mass and number discourage you. With systematic methods you can accomplish wonders. Without systematic methods I should never have discovered that old Pete Gibsmith's name was, in fact, Peter Gibb Smith, or that his father, John Gibb Smith, was the common ancestor of all the Gibsmiths and of your employer, Edgar Smith."

Nothing I could have said would have so quickly made Amos Hopstone himself again. He jumped to his feet, wild with avenging anger. He tore his cap and apron off and threw them on the floor with a gesture of rage. With a rapid motion of his hand he uncurled his mustache and mussed his prim hair.

"Hah!" he cried. "And them in this here house! I ain't got no gun, but I've got an axe!"

The thought that these Smiths, who had so long thwarted my love, would soon meet their fate filled me with unholy joy, and I was about to bid Amos Hopstone do his worst, when Kate passed the parlor door. As she passed she happened to see me, and the next moment she was in my arms, calling me her Samuel and clinging to me with all the love a mandolinist can feel for a cornetist of no mean ability. At that moment, while Amos Hopstone stood embarrassed by the sight of so much love, an awful thought came to me—Kate was, herself, a Smith! What had I don? I had doomed my one and only love to the fate of the Gibsmiths at the hand of Amos Hopstone.

"Stop, Amos Hopstone!" I cried, as he was about to dash from the room to find an axe. "Stop! Is this the patient, systematic method I advised? Would you go at your killing like a wild animal, dashing here and there, killing at random? Do not be a fool, Amos Hopstone! While you were exterminating youngish Smiths the oldest Smiths would die peacefully in their beds, escaping your avenging hand! Wait! Here is a list of all the Smiths now living east of the Mississippi and north of Mason and Dixon's line, beginning at the top of the list with the oldest living Smith. Take it! For the list I shall make no extra charge, but if you will accept the advice of a systematic man, you will begin your feud killings with the oldest Smith and proceed to kill them off in the order of their ages. Thus not a Smith will escape!"

Amos Hopstone hesitated, and I saw I had impressed him. He took the list from my hand. Luckily, Edgar Smith, his wife and my Kate were well down toward the middle of the list.

"One thing more!" I cried. "You say

you have no gun. I have a gun. Let me aid you in your vengeful work by presenting you with a gun."

"Thank you!" said Amos Hopstone, with tears in his eyes.

Cruel as this offer of mine may seem, as regards the Smiths, it was not in reality so. The gun, although doubtless an excellent on in its day, was not in the best of condition. Indeed, my great-great-grandfather had discarded it just after the Revolutionary War as being too inaccurate to use. My great-grandfather used it for years as a crowbar, and my grandfather and father had used it during their lives as a stove poker, and for the four years I had been boarding my landlady's negro helper had used it to poke cinders out of the furnace grate. It was a flint-lock musket, and I still possessed a handful of flints and the powder horn that went with the musket.

That evening Amos Hopstone called for the musket, and when he held it in his hands he looked at it rather disappointedly, but he said he would take it. He said he guessed it would shoot further than an axe, anyway. I doubted this, but I said nothing. When Amos Hopstone left my door that night with the musket under his arm, the handful of flints in his pocket, and the powder horn slung over his shoulder, it was the last time I ever saw him.

The next day I took a copy of the list of Smiths to Edgar Smith. He received me sullenly.

"I suppose I've got to pay you for this," he said, "but this branch of the Smith family is going to the dogs, and the more ancestors it has the more ashamed of itself it ought to be. Kate is pining away, and my wife is about sick over it all, and now Amos Hopstone has gone off without so much as giving us notice!"

He seemed so depressed that I thought best not to tell him why Amos Hopstone had left. Neither did I think it an opportune time to call his attention to the fact that Grandma Smith's name stood at the very top of the list of all the Smiths. I merely mentioned that he now owed me the first payment on his genealogical tree. He immediately ordered me out of the house. His cup of trouble seemed overfull.

But the last week in January a new worry came to him. He received a letter from Grandma Smith in New Hampshire. The penmanship was cramped and uncertain because Grandma Smith had written the letter in the open air with woolen mittens on her hands.

"My dear son," it said, "I am in good health, but nervous. That old jackanapes Wilmot still sits on the other side of the fence with his cow in hand. But do not imagine I am afraid of him. I am worried about something else. About the first of this month an uncouth man with black hair and brown pants came to this neighborhood, and every day he hides behind a tree across the road and shoots. I have no idea what he is shooting at, but he is a reckless shooter. Several times a bullet has come into my yard. I am worried. He shoots all day, and the noise annoys me. I believe he is insane."

A few days later Edgar Smith received a second letter.

"My dear son," it read: "That crazy man is still here, and I am sure now he is crazy. This morning he crossed the road and rested his gun on my fence. I almost believe he is shooting in this direction. Every eight or ten shots he becomes violently insane and throws down the gun and jumps on it. It is making me nervous."

The next day another letter arrived.

"My dear son, I am becoming nervous over the actions of the crazy man with the gun. To-day he climbed over the fence into my yard and hid behind an apple tree, and he has been shooting all day. At three o'clock this afternoon he shot that old jackanapes Wilmot's cow.

I hoped then that he had shot what he had come to shoot, but no; he is still shooting. Can he be shooting at something in my yard?"

The next day there was no letter, but the day after that there was one.

"My dear son," it said, "I am packing my trunk to-night and I shall start for Westcote to-morrow. I cannot stand this crazy man any longer. He is on my nerves. At eleven o'clock this morning that old jackanapes Wilmot was shot in the leg and was taken away to the hospital, but not before he had said he would buy my farm if I would call off the man with the gun. I accepted the first payment and we shook hands on the bargain while the man with the gun banged away at whatever it is he is shooting at. I still consider that old jackanapes an old jackanapes, however. I reserve that privilege. I am writing this in my dining-room, and the man with the gun is outside, leaning on the window-sill and firing into the room. I am tempted to believe he is shooting at me. Only a minute ago when I turned to look at him he asked me, with tears in his eyes, to please sit still. The room is full of powder smoke. I begin to fear that my life is in danger."

When Edgar Smith handed me this letter his face was bright and smiling.

"Now," he said, "our troubles are at an end. You must come over this evening and bring your cornet, and we will celebrate your engagement. The wedding may be as soon as you and Kate wish, and Mrs. Smith has already decided on your wedding present."

"Forks or spoons?" I asked merrily.

"Neither," said Mr. Smith. "We are going to give you one of those silver-plated things that look like an egg and that are used to stick in the horn end of a cornet so it will not make so much noise."

Thus Amos Hopstone brought joy to two fond souls, and happiness to a home, for had he not started out to exterminate Grandma Smith she would, no doubt, still be quarreling with Grandfather Wilmot, and Kate and I would still be parted. This proves again the value of genealogy.

A few days ago I received a letter from Amos Hopstone.

"Deer sur," it said, "I've past on to Smith number two. Number wun was bulet proof. Thare's too manny Smiths to waste bulets on bulet-proof wuns when thare so old. Lett hur die of ole age if she wants too. Yours foar vengins, Amos Hopstone."

AN EYE FOR A TOOTH

By ALBERT W. TOLMAN

HEN Festus Carey burst upon Chili, he had burned his bridges behind him by losing his return fare at poker on the Valparaiso steamer. His sole assets, on arrival at Santiago, consisted of his tongue, his face and a suitcase full of bricks.

Nevertheless, he whistled blithely, as he walked along the Plaza. What cared he for mere money? His tongue was a sliver of the original blarney stone. As for his face, his friend Ben Greenhow, who knew Greek mythology, had always insisted that, if Apollo had been red-haired, he would have been almost as good-looking as Festus. To crown all, were not the bricks in his suitcase steel-engraved in three colors and of the purest gold?

How could any stock-and-bond salesman desire more! Festus promptly engaged the best room in the Hotel de Francia and started in breaking hearts and bank accounts.

Now people who inhabit glass houses should not throw brickbats. Bachelors with breakable hearts should not engage lightly in heartbreaking. The first shy glance from Carmen Montijo's purple eyes rocked Festus's heart to its foundation; the second cracked it innumerably from centre to circumference; and the third smashed it to smithereens. Festus was unable to retain even these smithereens; Carmen had them all in her collection, properly labeled. He did not want his heart again; but he wanted Carmen's instead. In that respect he agreed with sundry native swains, notably Don José Carafa.

Just about that time the Alcarzar incident set Señor Chili and Uncle Sam reaching back for their pistol-pockets. Santiago boiled with patriotism. It knocked the bottom out of the market for American bricks. Even Festus could not sell any. A Yankee was as popular as a wasp in a hornet's nest. Everybody who could, struck for the States. Festus lingered. How could he go, when he had a vacuum in his left breast! Carmen would not give his heart back; at any rate, he had not the courage to ask for it. What should he do?

He argued it out with himself, as he stood shaving that night in his room at the Francia. Said Festus: "If I go, Don José 'll get Carmen." Replied Carey:

"If you stay, some coffee-colored don 'll get you."

"Go quick!" said his New York.

"Stay to the finish!" commanded his Irish. Without even the informality of tossing a cent, Festus decided.

"Stay it is!"

Outside his window the Chilian national anthem blared truculently from a passing band.

> "Dulce patria, recibe los votos,
> Con que Chile en tus aras juro."

Festus had one rosy cheek scraped clean, when—*psst!*—the mirror spattered into a million fragments. A pile-driver smote him in the jaw. He clapped his free hand to his mouth: a front tooth had been broken. He fingered the fracture ruefully.

"I knew I was homely, but not so bad as to smash a glass."

Stooping, he picked up the flattened, leaden slug that had marred his beauty by its rebound from the stone wall. Exactly over the dent he hung a small hand mirror and again lifted his razor.

"Try another shot, you chocolate-livered two-spot, and see if you can't do a better job."

After all, the shot had not been so bad. The bullet had fanned his jaw. A half inch to the right and it would have smashed something besides glass. Back there in the dark street a brace of villainous eyes might be sighting again and a cigarette-yellowed finger twitching on the trigger. Festus finished shaving; but an odd cramp plucked occasionally at the nape of his neck.

Where should he go that night? The hostile music, the murderous shot, had set the blood running hotly in his veins.

"Me for the Pacific Club!"

He stuck two carnations, the color of Carmen's eyes, jauntily in his left buttonhole. On his right lapel he pinned a tiny American flag. Slipping a loaded revolver into his pocket, he strode down through the hotel office and out upon the Plaza, whistling "Yankee Doodle."

Under an empurpled, star-glorious sky that somehow reminded him of Carmen, through thronged streets where the very air seemed aflame with "Dulce Patria," Carey came to the palm-set portal of the Pacific Club. The reception committee were as glad to see him as the custodians of a powder magazine would be to admit a lunatic with a lighted torch.

It was a hot night; yet a chill struck Carey's vitals the moment he passed the carved door. He was reminded of a cold-storage plant he had once visited in mid-summer in linen suit and straw hat.

Festus was not easily disheartened. He determined to break the ice with somebody.

"Fine night, Don Luis," he remarked to a mahogany-visaged señor.

"A-umph!" Don Luis achieved an excellent imitation of a bulldog disturbed from his bone. Evidently conversation was not his long suit that evening.

"You to the bench!" growled Festus under his breath. He turned to another acquaintance.

"Think you'll push that spur track into Orocibo this season, Don Felipe?"

"Mm-r-r-rum!" Don Felipe's cordiality matched that of Don Luis.

Mentally consigning him to a warmer place than the bench, Festus joined a group of young bloods, chatting and laughing near by. At the first break he launched a funny story. Carey's stories were famous in Santiago; but somehow this one bounded off his hearers like birdshot off armorplate. Nobody laughed but himself. Soon the group disintegrated.

So it went. Whenever he approached, conversation died, knot after knot dispersed. He had a rare chance to see what good work Santiago tailors could do on their customers' backs. His broken tooth was twinging just enough to make him feel ugly.

Along came a band thunderlng "Dulce Patria." The club crowded the windows and hurled back volleys of *vivas*.

Carey noted a contemptuous jerk of Don Jerman Agostino's thumb. He caught a dagger glance from Señor Federico Ramos. His pride was pricked by an innuendo, hissed beneath little Ricardo Vera's needle-pointed mustache. Bah! what was the use of noticing such things? He knew nothing personal was intended.

Smiling defiantly, he determined to stay it out. Nobody would play poker with him; nobody would smoke; nobody would drink. They shunned him like a leper.

In sauntered Carmen's youngest brother.

"Hi, Juan!" hailed Carey breezily. "Have something with me?"

Juan scowled, reddened, muttered, turned his back like everybody else. Festus's choler rose. He almost said

something, but bit it off just in time. How could he fight with a fellow who had Carmen's wondrous eyes! But let anybody else beware.

Moodily he drank alone, once, twice, thrice. As the liquor filtered up into his brain, his temper snapped its tether. He began muttering to himself.

"Chili and Uncle Sam! Bah! A couple of warships flying the Stars and Stripes off Valparaiso—"

Solitaire grew tiresome. He forced his patriotism on others. When those whom he accosted turned away without replying, he became almost abusive. His hearers only smiled. The American señor was forgetting himself; rather, he had thrown aside the cloak and was revealing his true nature. Their disdain made him furious.

He drifted out into the billiard room. Don José Carafa was playing pool with Lieutenant Emilio Castelar. Carey lounged over the green cloth, making free comments. José bungled an easy shot.

"Good work, José!" applauded Festus ironically; but the two contestants were blind and deaf.

Festus took their disregard as a direct insult. He pondered. Should he tweak Don José's nose or tread on the toes of the lieutenant? Neither. It savored of murder to provoke a duel with José and of suicide to embroil himself with Emilio.

"One moment, señor!"

Two taloned fingers tapped his shoulder peremptorily. Festus knew in a flash that their owner was looking for trouble. He whirled quickly and encountered a swarthy, sneering face.

It belonged to a well-dressed, medium-built stranger of about forty. He wore a heavy black beard, and blue glasses adorned his hook nose.

"The Señor Yankee plays the billiards, no?"

The patronizing tone stung Carey.

"A little," was his curt reply.

"I am Don Ramon de Volturo," proclaimed Blackbeard pompuously. "Will the Señor Carey condescend to squander his skill on an unworthy Chilian? Possibly the señor may discover that others besides those of his own blood can handle a cue."

"I'll take you on for a game or two," conceded Festus.

Don Ramon rose dramatically upon his tiptoes.

"Let us play, then! Chilian against Yankee! And for money? No! Friends play for money. And we are not friends. No!"

He paused and looked about. Everybody was listening.

"Name the stakes," snapped Festus. Don Ramon's pose became more exaggerated.

"The señor would fight for his own good name, his country's honor, yes? Wounds from sword or bullet are soon healed; and even if death come, it is speedy, painless. But the real pain, real peril—ah! Would the señor stake a hand and perhaps go through life maimed; or a foot, and risk becoming a cripple; or an eye, and spend the balance of his years half-blind? Yet there are men of Spanish blood who would count these things light as compared with honor."

Spontaneous applause broke from the listeners. *Viva! Caramba!* Shades of O'Higgins! Don Ramon choked, flung out his arms impulsively.

"The señor is good at boasting. Now let him make his boasts good! I challenge him. On this table we will fight a real duel, hand to hand, brain to brain, eye to eye. And the stake? Hah! Let us set it high. My right eye against his! Loser's to be removed and presented to the victor. What says the brave American?"

Sobered by this unexpected proposition, Festus hesitated. Thrusting his face close to the American's, Don Ramon hissed:

"Let the señor accept, or forever be branded a coward who dared not make good the lying boasts that fell from his tongue."

José Carafa's beardless lips smiled a low word to Castelar and the lieutenant chuckled. Volcanic passion surged over Carey's inflamed brain. If bluffed by this ranting braggart, he would become the laughing stock of Santiago.

"Done!" he cried.

"Bueno!" exclaimed his challenger with grim satisfaction. "We will play a game that shall never be forgotten in Santiago."

Now Festus had as yet found no Chilian who could beat him at billiards. Moreover, he was young and self-confident, the liquor was in his brain, and he was very, very angry. Compared with his wounded pride, his country's honor, what was an eye! Pooh! A mere bagatelle, a trifle inconsiderable!

"I propose," said Blackbeard, "that the secretary of the club, Don Carlos Sanchez, act as referee."

Carey nodded. Stern old Don Carlos knit his frosty brows.

"I do not like this wager. If either man wishes to withdraw before I accept, the way is still open."

The two glared at each other in silence. Don Carlos resumed.

"Very well. I will act as referee. You both clearly understand and agree that the loser's eye is to be removed and presented to the winner. The terms will be strictly enforced."

"Bueno!" ejaculated Don Ramon again; but a shadow crossed his sinister face. The secretary's cold words made Festus likewise uncomfortable. He felt sure of winning. Of course he would not claim Don Ramon's eye, but he would teach him a wholesome lesson. Yet if some unlucky chance should give the Chilian the game—! A chill ran down Festus's spine.

Something besides his eye was at stake. Carmen also hung upon the issue. A one-eyed lover! Bah! It was too ridiculous. What a fool he had been!

With polar politeness somebody handed him a cue, or was it an icicle? The game began.

Never had such a wager been laid in Santiago. Soon the billiard room was crowded. A double row of dons and señors in evening dress, short and tall, fat and thin, old and young, surrounded the table. The faces of the second rank peered between those of the first. Spiky beards bristled. White teeth, grinning under pointed mustaches, gripped smoking cigars and cigarettes. Hostile eyes glared from under crowns bald, or sleek, or bushy, black, or gray, or white.

It was a gallery to dismay an expert. And all were against Carey, even Juan.

Festus felt as stiff and angular as a jumping Jack. His arm jerked like a hunter's with buck fever. His knees wobbled. His soles were heavy as lead.

Not so Don Ramon. He played easily, coldly, undisturbed by the crowd. An eye more or less? What mattered it to a man of forty who wore blue glasses and was not in love with Carmen!

Moreover, Carey had to confess that in skill his opponent was fully his equal, if not his superior. Blackbeard had dropped his bombastic manner and was forging rapidly ahead. What if he were a professional who had goaded the hot-headed American into a wager that could have but one result!

At first Spanish politeness gave Festus all the applause. Whenever he scored an easy shot, they applauded like mad, Don José especially.

Dios! What an eye! What precision! Admirable! Magnificent! Marvelous!

Soon, however, they dropped the mask. Heads shook sidewise at his good strokes, nodded approval when he missed. The older brains, liquor-proof, kept silent; but the younger tongues, loosened by *aguadiente*, began wagging.

Low words of triumph ran round the table when his opponent scored.

Ah-h-h! Car-r-ram-mba! Bravo, Don Ramon! A good shot, that! Let the American señor match it, if he cared for his eye. But perhaps he knew how to grow a new one. Those Yankees could do almost anything.

Carey's attention was distracted from the play. An acute pain began to bore through his eye. He bungled execrably. Blackbeard assumed a haughty swagger. He felt himself already victorious.

The room swam dizzily about Festus. Hate surrounded him like a palpable vapor, oppressive, stifling. The balls that spun and clicked on the green cloth seemed metamorphosed into rolling eyes.

He trod on Señor Valverde's toe: the señor was the best pistol-shot in Santiago. He poked the butt of his cue into Colonel Vicenza's solar plexus: the colonel wielded the most facile blade in Chili. Both received his apologies with a stiffness that bespoke cards and seconds and a morning tête-à-tête in the suburbs.

Utter desperation restored his courage and coolness.

"If I've got to lose, at any rate I'll lose like a man."

He began playing as he had never played in his life before, fighting uphill. Out of Juan's hostile eyes looked Carmen, inspiring him. He pressed his enemy hard.

Blackbeard lost his cocksure swagger; his play fell off. Now and then a wild stroke proved costly. He began gnawing his lips.

Both were in a trap from which only one could escape.

At last came the crisis. Don Ramon had left the balls in an extremely difficult position. Unless Carey could make the next shot, the game was lost.

Never had Festus achieved such a shot. He did not dream he could make it now. But on it hung the game—his right eye—Carmen!

Don Ramon, confident of triumph, was tapping out an insolent tattoo with his cue upon the floor. José Carafa hugged himself with a Satanic grin. For him the game was proving a cat's paw to pull his chestnuts from the fire. The human wall about the table stared, breathless, open-mouthed.

Carey pulled himself together. His heart was pounding hard, but his muscles were taut, his nerves like steel.

Like a rattlesnake striking, his cue darted forward.

Click!

The game was over. He had saved his right eye, and won his opponent's.

Bueno! Ah-h-h-h! Bueno! Wonderful! A buzz of unwilling admiration rose. This time it was sincere.

Weak and shaking, Carey straightened and threw back his shoulders. He might be riddled in a dozen duels, but he would never be ridiculous in the sight of Carmen.

The room hushed. Outside "Dulce Patria" pealed unnoticed. Everybody was waiting to see what would happen next.

Don Ramon's tallow face twitched. His fingers writhed round his cue. He drew his hand hastily across his forehead, knocking off his glasses. His panic, as he stooped to recover them, would have been laughable, had it not displayed such abject fear. Carey looked at him with pitying contempt. And this was the swashbuckler who had counted all things light as compared with honor!

Don Carlos Sanchez, the referee, stepped forward, breaking the painful silence.

"Señor," he said to Festus, "you have won."

"Let him keep his eye," returned Carey. "I have beaten him fairly. That is enough."

Don Ramon drew a breath of relief, but the secretary shrugged his shoulders.

"Permit me to remind you, Señor,

that your part, as one of the contestants, is over; mine, as judge, is just begun."

Festus looked his surprise. Don Ramon's jaw dropped.

"There were three parties to this wager: the two contestants, and the referee, representing the Pacific Club. It is an inflexible law that any agreement made within our walls must be carried out to the letter. That law has never been broken. It never will be broken, so long as I am secretary. The loser must pay the forfeit."

"But, man dear, I do not want his eye," remonstrated Carey.

"That is purely immaterial. You have no choice in the case. Neither have I. The right eye of the loser was to be *removed* and presented to the victor. Whether or not you care to accept it is another matter with which I have nothing to do. The agreement stands unalterable. Otherwise the game was a farce. The Pacific Club does not encourage vaudeville."

Realizing the futility of further objection, Carey became silent. Don Ramon glanced hopelessly this way and that, like a trapped rat, seeking escape. The stern old Chilian eyed his shrinking compatriot with disgust.

"It is unfortunate, regrettable; but the señor should not have proposed the wager, had he been unwilling to abide the issue. Is Señor Doctor Riesco present?"

A short, bald man in the second row pushed himself to the front.

"Have you your case of instruments?"

The surgeon nodded. The secretary glanced toward Don Ramon.

"We are ready, señor. It is useless to delay."

Like a condemned felon, Blackbeard followed Don Carlos and the doctor into the cloak-room. The door closed.

A deeper silence settled over the club. Festus was the target of malevolent glances. That he had declined to accept his opponent's eye apparently made little difference in the feeling toward him, at least outwardly.

Behind the closed door voices sounded; at first low, then high, excited, angry. There was a scuffle. Then the outer door slammed and feet ran down the steps.

In rushed Don Carlos, followed by the doctor. The secretary's white mustaches bristled; his eyes blazed; his face was apoplectic.

"Astounding! Incredible!" he burst forth. "He has fled, the dastard, the hound! But before he went—"

He hissed a few choking words. There was a moment of stupefied silence. Then exclamations of wrath filled the room.

Don Carlos recovered his self-control.

"Señor, I have the honor."

Ceremoniously, he offered Carey a folded handkerchief.

"I said I did not care for it," declined Festus.

"Then," said Doctor Riesco, "I will claim it as my fee."

Taking the parcel from the secretary, he slipped it into his pocket. Again Don Carlos spoke.

"The Señor Carey is a gallant man. The events of the evening may have led him to question the honor of the Pacific Club. If so, I am sure he will find its members ready to give him satisfaction."

An approving murmur greeted these words.

"I am perfectly satisfied," said Festus. "I do not doubt the honor of the club."

Once more the secretary spoke.

"Henceforth, so long as the señor abides among us, he is to continue to enjoy our privileges. Chilians respect brave men, even though they may be foes."

Thunders of applause filled the room. The members swarmed round Festus. They fought for the honor of shaking his hand. Instead of challenging to

duels, they overwhelmed him with invitations to drink. He had become at a single bound the most popular man in Santiago. Don José Carafa, with tears in his eyes, plighted eternal friendship. It made Carey's head swim. And when they broke up at an early hour the next morning, the entire club constituted itself his guard of honor, and escorted him to Hotel de Francia to the mingled strains of "Dulce Patria" and "Yankee Doodle."

Festus still sells stocks and bonds in Santiago. The dentist replaced his broken tooth with a gold one. At his marriage with Carmen, José Carafa was best man. And everybody was happy save Don Ramon de Volturo, somewhere in the outer darkness, sulking over the loss of his glass eye.

THE REFORMATION OF MORT HARLEY

By MICHAEL GROSS

HE big clock that beamed benignly down on the sales office from its ancient position over the bald head of Tepler, the estimate man, had just struck the hour of five. As the whirring, asthmatic gasp that followed the sounding of the last stroke died away, each one of the five salesmen in the office suddenly became exceedingly busy. There was a noisy rattling of papers in the pigeonholes of the old-fashioned roll-top desks and a great scratching of pens and pencils, as though each man, with but another half hour to work, had made the startling discovery that some vital part of the day's duties had been overlooked; some important detail forgotten that must be attended to immediately and noisily. Not so far wrong, it would seem, was the eminent psychologist who declared that if every salesman labored as hard all day as he did during the last half hour he spent in the sales office, the additional orders thus secured would stretch from Kankakee to the Zuyder Zee and back to Peru, Indiana.

While this buzz of activity was at its height, the door leading into the sales office was quietly opened and a young man, well dressed, smooth-faced, keen-eyed, but with a troubled and apprehensive expression of countenance, walked in, glanced around quickly, and then made for a shut desk standing in the extreme corner of the room. He had only half reached it when Sol Blake, a thin, sallow-complexioned individual with pompadour hair, who occupied one of the desks near the door, yelled out, loud enough for all in the office to hear:

"Curtain let down rather early to-day, didn't it, Mort? Must have been a bum show. But I suppose you'd rather see a bum show than do a good day's plugging."

There was an immediate though partly suppressed giggle from the stenographers in the railed enclosure at the rear of the room. Even Miss Brandon, the new bookkeeper, happening to catch the eye of Blake's victim as he glanced back, smiled a curious little smile at the remark and then hastily bent down, ostensibly to arrange her ledgers in the safe for the night.

A slow flush came into Mort Harley's cheeks at the insolent tone in which the remark had been uttered and for a brief instant his eyes blazed. Then, with a shake of his head and a wan smile, he pushed back the cover of his desk, dropped heavily into his chair, and gazed stonily at the row of empty pigeonholes that stared out at him.

Mortimer Harley, the oldest man in point of service on the sales force of the Stoner Printing Company, was in a rut. That was all that ailed him, but, like merry Mercutio's wound, 'twas enough. The first five years Mort had put in for old man Stoner had been his banner ones. He had rounded each one of these five milestones as the star man, with a yearly sales total far above that of his nearest rival. Salesman prodigies might

come and, their bubble of greatness punctured, pass on again, but Mort Harley kept his lead and both he and the Stoner Printing Company, like the Pharisees of old, grew great and profiteth exceedingly. Starting with a drawing account of twenty-five dollars, Mort had doubled this sum the third year and at the end of the fifth had raised it to a hundred dollars a week.

Suddenly the slump had come, for no particular reason insofar as anyone could discover. As old man Stoner expressed it at the time:

"Mort seems to have mislaid his pep somewhere or other, and the pity of it is that he acts as if he didn't care whether or not he ever found it again."

Even Mort himself would have been puzzled to account for his sudden loss of ambition—his sudden feeling that, as there was no one except the old man (and his interest was purely a selfish one) to care whether or not he was leading, he might as well take things easy and just drift along. Once the habit had been formed, Mort found it increasingly easier to continue drifting.

Luckily, the momentum acquired during five years of earnest effort was not to be lost in a day, and, because he had always led the sales force by a wide margin, Mort stayed up at the top for several years after the spirit departed from him and he had stopped trying. But his lead, as well as his drawing account, had been gradually cut down until, at the time this story opens, Sol Blake, a blank cartridge belonging to the genus "plugger"—a man whose sole qualification was the number of doorbells he was willing to ring and his ability to hang on until a buyer gave him an order out of sheer desperation—had earned the coveted title of "star man."

Blake had been with the Stoner Printing Company only a little over two years and Mort, as he sat moodily at his desk, let his mind run back to the time when the new man had first been hired. Blake, at that time, had been the personification of meekness. "Yes-sayer Blake" was the name the boys had given him, due to the fact that no matter how exotic a move old man Stoner might propose, he could always depend on the new man's meek and humble "Yes, sir, Mr. Stoner." Even when the boss made his famous (or, one might more correctly say, infamous) suggestion that the salesmen write out time tickets to show how many prospects they had called on each day, Blake was the only man in the office who had declared in favor of the scheme.

But as his sales total rose, Blake's humbleness gradually fell from him and, since acquiring the leadership, no one in the office seemed safe from his sarcastic tongue. The stenographers, if the faces they made while taking his dictation did not belie their feelings, cordially detested him, despite which, he continued to scatter his "dearies" and "girlies" impartially among them. It was even rumored that Miss North, the former bookkeeper, had left her job, after seven years of service, solely because she found herself unable to put up with Blake's sarcastic comments on her way of doing things.

At the recollection of Miss North, a pensive smile came over Mort's face. She had been a tall, angular, awkward type of girl, with a freckled skin, a large nose and front teeth that projected over her lower lip. Tepler once told Mort that, back in the old days, old man Stoner's eldest boy had eloped with one of the bookkeepers and that Miss North was then hired, so that the same thing could not possibly happen to any other of Stoner's sons. But the twinkle in Miss North's eyes, her unfailing good humor, and her willingness to do things for the salesmen, had made her a prime favorite in the office and everyone but Blake was really sorry to see her go.

A few days later Miss Brandon had taken up the duties of bookkeeper. The fact that she had been engaged proved

conclusively that all of old man Stoner's sons were either safely married or else out of town for extended periods. Mort, to use his own expression, had "fallen hard" for the new girl from the moment he had set eyes on her.

She was small, slender, and moved about with quick, graceful, bird-like movements. She had a fair skin, her eyes were dark and her hair, worn low over her forehead, was golden brown in color.

It was to be expected that the star man would attempt to go further with the new girl than anyone else in the office, and Mort unconsciously clenched his fists as he recalled Blake's habit of working away busily at his desk until Miss Brandon was about to put on her coat, then strolling out to the elevator in the hope of riding down with her and seeing her to the car. But Mort's sense of fairness made him admit that Miss Brandon did not seem to object very strongly to Blake's company on these occasions and also that, insofar as he was concerned, the new bookkeeper had not spoken a half-dozen words to him outside of business routine since she had entered the employ of the Stoner Printing Company.

Among the many and varied duties that old man Stoner had laid down for the bookkeeping department was the one of furnishing each salesman with a typewritten slip showing the number of orders he had taken during the week. These slips were made out on Friday night and placed on the desk of each man bright and early Saturday morning, the idea being that when the salaries were given out a little later in the day such salesmen as were behind in their quota could become properly conscience-stricken and resolve to do better the week following.

The Friday night after the incident of Blake's insult, as Mort was seated at his desk in the corner of the room, surreptitiously engaged in watching Miss Brandon as she pored over a giant ledger, he was surprised to see her suddenly pause in her work, pick up a sheet of paper, and then walk straight towards him. Arriving at Mort's desk, Miss Brandon placed the memorandum in front of him; then, before he had time to even hazard a guess at what the sheet contained, she said, in a low but ironical tone of voice:

"Your sales total for this week was so easy to make out, Mr. Harley, that I thought I would let you have it to-night. The other boys," and she unduly emphasized the words, "will receive their slips to-morrow morning."

Mort smiled in a rather shame-faced way at the remark, but without giving him a chance to form a reply, Miss Brandon turned on her heel and walked across the room. She paused for a moment in front of Sol Blake's desk, whispered something to him at which they both laughed, and then took her place behind the enclosure again.

Mort gritted his teeth. "A wallop right under the heart," he murmured to himself. "She thinks I'm a dub and I don't blame her. But what she sees in that guy Blake I can't for the life of me make out."

The following morning, as if she had read his mind the evening before and knew the question that puzzled him, Miss Brandon, after a moment's discussion about how to bill one of Mort's accounts, brought up the subject of Sol Blake.

"I like Mr. Blake," she confessed candidly. "I always admire a man who excels in the thing he sets out to do. I believe that if Fate or circumstances has made a man a ditch-digger he ought to strive to be the best one in the business; if printing is his trade let him earnestly try to be a better workman than anyone else in the shop; if he decides to sell goods instead of making them, let him sell more than anyone else on the sales force, the way Mr. Blake does here. I don't think I could ever like a man who

just held on to his job by the skin of his teeth."

"Knockout number two," was Mort's grim comment to himself, as Miss Brandon walked back to her desk. "That little lady can sure wax sarcastic when she gets going, and I seem to have the unhappy knack of getting her going every time she talks to me."

But it is a fact worthy of comment that, instead of sinking wearily down into his chair again after this conversation, Mort took the file-box containing his list of customers out of the bottom drawer of his desk and commenced going through it, slowly and painstakingly.

The following Friday night Miss Brandon laid another sales slip on Mort's desk.

"This one was even easier than the last to make out," was all she said, and was about to turn away, when Mort stopped her with a restraining gesture.

"You know, we're in an off season for printing orders," he said, apologetically. "There won't be very much doing now until the advertising men get their new appropriations."

Miss Brandon smiled, a curious, whimsical smile. "Mr. Blake doesn't seem to have any trouble exceeding his quota despite bad conditions. This is the seventh consecutive week that his sales have more than tripled yours."

The mention of Blake's name was like setting a match to gunpowder.

"Anyone can get orders the way Blake gets them," Mort protested. "He isn't a salesman; he's a leech. He hangs on to a buyer until the poor fellow gives him an order to get rid of him. Why, he'd go out and sit on a buyer's grave for a week before giving up all chances of squeezing a contract out of him."

"According to what you say," Miss Brandon countered, "any salesman could do as well as Mr. Blake is doing, if he used the same method."

"You can just bet your bottom dollar he could," was Mort's emphatic answer.

"I don't believe it," said Miss Brandon, and walked back to her desk.

"I'll make you believe it, my sarcastic little lady," Mort murmured to himself savagely, and again the file-box hove into view. But this time several of the cards came out and were slammed down to one side.

For the first time in more years than he cared or dared to remember, Mort was anxious for the end of the week to come around. He was curious to hear what Miss Brandon would have to say about his latest sales slip. To make good his statement that any salesman could get orders by following Blake's method, Mort had spent the week "leeching," as he called it, on several of his old-time customers, concerns who could always be made to dig up a printing order if kept after hard enough.

The first surprise of the week came when Miss Brandon, despite the fact that Mort had doubled any of his previous sales slips, again picked Friday night to hand him his weekly selling total; the second and still greater surprise arrived when she failed to make any comment whatever on his increased business, merely contenting herself with putting the slip on the desk and giving Mort an enigmatical little smile.

"I suppose Blake tripled my sales again this time," Mort finally blurted out, after waiting in vain for Miss Brandon to open the conversation.

"I don't believe he did," Miss Brandon answered, with evident reluctance, "but it's only because you were lucky enough to fall into that Statler-Norris Company car sign order. They were just about due for new designs and would no doubt have placed the business with us whether you were here or not. If I were a salesman and got a lucky break like that, I believe I would accept it as a gift straight from heaven and keep quiet about it," Miss Brandon let fly as a parting shot, as she walked away.

"Gosh! that girl wouldn't change her

views about me if I sold Lenine and Trotzky a million four-color posters of the Czar sitting on the throne at Petrograd," Mort ejaculated, as he gazed angrily at the retreating form of the bookkeeper. "Nothing I do seems to please her; yet she almost goes into hysterics every time Blake pulls down a five-hundred dollar contract, and knows no peace until she has confided to me all the horrible details. Well, we'll see how long that false alarm lasts once I hit my stride. I'll put him down flatter than a pancake, if only to show that Brandon lady that I can do it.

But this was much easier said than done. In the same manner that Mort's previous momentum had kept him at the head of the sales force long after he had stopped trying, just so did his extended inertia now make it almost impossible for him to launch any concentrated effort or to "follow through" in the old accustomed manner that used to spell orders. He dug into his list of customers as with a fine comb; made ten calls a day where he had only been in the habit of making one; and even took to sitting up nights constructing dummies and laying out direct-mail campaigns to submit to such customers as he knew were in the market.

To his intense surprise he found that, even after a long strenuous day's hunt in search of the elusive order, he went home at night less tired, both mentally and physically, than when he used to spend his time strolling aimlessly about the city. He also made the discovery that he was gradually becoming more cheerful; that he was once again finding all his old-time joy in the task of turning leads into prospects, and prospects into customers.

Despite his earnest striving, however, luck seemed to be against him and, time after time, he would work an account up to the point of ordering only to have something happen that would lose the business for him.

"If I were just going after the stuff to please the old man or to pile up a big sales total," Mort would say to himself bitterly, as he saw contract after contract slipping away, "I wouldn't care so much. But it's up to me to show that sarcastic little lady enemy of mine that I've still got a kick or two left in me, despite all she may think to the contrary, and I'll do it if it means getting my shoes resoled every week."

The first intimation Mort had that Miss Brandon knew he was really trying to get business was when, a few weeks after his resolve to beat Blake, she accidently ran into him in the hallway.

"It's getting to be a much harder task than usual to make out your sales slips," was her opening comment on that occasion. Then, as if afraid that she had unintentionally been too kind, she made haste to add: "If you'll remember, you once said that all any salesman required to equal Mr. Blake's record was the ability to plug. Well, if I'm not mistaken, you have been plugging away rather steadily for the last month, and yet I don't mind telling you that if Mr. Blake lands a certain contract that he now has pending, he will triple your sales of this week, good as they are."

Mort was about to remark if it was a matter of figuring on orders that were still pending he could make himself out a leader, too, but he refrained from doing so. Instead he merely observed, in an off-hand manner: "Oh, I'm just catching my wind now. Watch the old boat move along next week."

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than Mort regretted having said them. He knew Miss Brandon well enough to realize that if he failed to make good his boast she would metaphorically flay the hide off him in that kind yet cutting way she had of expressing herself. He went back to his desk solemnly resolved that in the next seven days he would double the sales of any one of his previous weeks or die in the attempt.

For once luck seemed to be with him. The following Monday morning he ran into a lead that promised to pan out big, a yearly contract proposition which, if he succeeded in closing it, would be certain to put him ahead of any other salesman on the force.

The Standard Remedy Company, makers of a line of proprietary medicines, were interested in a monthly window display service to go out to their twelve-hundred dealers located all over the United States, and if Mort could swing the business it would mean a twelve-month contract, placed all at one time. His chances were good, too, for Folsam, the advertising man, was an old time friend of his and, while too square a fellow to play favorites, would at least see to it that Mort was given every possible chance to submit such designs as were likely to prove acceptable to the heads of the concern.

Mort sat up all of Monday night writing out his suggestions to the art department and making rough sketch ideas of the preliminary show cards and window trims to advertise Standard Remedies. Each trim was to consist of a large center screen display, four small cards, a dozen price tickets, and a set of paper strips to be pasted on the window itself. Not only did suitable copy have to be written, but the designs had to be laid out for an entire month's service and Mort burned the midnight Mazda to get this preliminary work done—doing it, as he confessed to himself with a grin on tumbling into bed a few hours after midnight, just because he was afraid of what a little girl who scarce came up to his shoulder would say to him if he failed to nail the contract.

Mort came in bright and early Tuesday morning, slipped up the cover of his antiquated desk with a joyous bang, laid down the package containing the precious layouts, and then prepared to pitch in and finish up the work started the night before.

He had hardly seated himself and buckled down to the task than he felt a nervous tap on his shoulder and, swinging around in his chair, came face to face with Fred Devins, one of the recent additions to the sales force.

Devins was a tall, thin, sandy-haired fellow, with a low, hesitating sort of voice and a habit of forcing his mouth into a pathetic sort of smile after everything he said. Mort had noticed him about the office once or twice and now remembered having been puzzled at the strange twist of fate which made a person so obviously unfitted for the work take up the profession of salesmanship.

"What can I do for you, old man?" Mort asked pleasantly, motioning Devins to the visitor's chair next to his desk.

Devins folded himself into the chair and commenced passing his hands nervously through his hair as if undecided how or where to begin.

"Are you doing anything for the Standard Remedy Company?" he finally asked.

Mort pointed to the heap of rough sketches scattered over the desk. "Doesn't that look as if I am?" he answered. "But what makes you ask?"

"Because that's what I would like to talk to you about," Devins said hesitatingly. "You see," he went on, "I'm only here on a six-month's probationary basis, and unless I make good at the end of that time, why, I can't continue to hold the job."

Mort nodded, at the same time wondering what in the world the new man was leading up to.

"I did fine the first three weeks," Devins continued, "but then both my wife and the youngster got taken down with the influenza at the one time and—" Devins gulped hard and forced a smile—"between nursing them and running around to doctors, I haven't had much of a chance to hustle out after business. And the bad part of it is that I need the orders and this job worse now than I ever did, if I'm going to pull them through."

Again Devins paused, flashed that pathetic smile of his and looked up at Mort as if waiting for permission to continue.

"Last night," he finally went on, seeing that Mort kept silent, "Mr. Compton —you know, he's my brother-in-law; married my wife's sister—came up to see us with his wife. Mr. Compton is vice-president of the Standard Remedy Company and he told me about the monthly window display service that his concern intends getting out. He asked me to come down to see him to-day and he would try to put the contract my way."

"It's too bad that the Standard Remedy Company happens to be my account," Mort broke in. "But that's the way this game goes," he added, sympathetically. "It seems every salesman in the business would be a riproaring success if he could only solicit the customers on some other fellow's list."

Mort's sudden interruption seemed to confuse Devins for a moment. "I know it's your account," he finally said, "but I was going to ask you whether I couldn't or—er—whether you wouldn't let me go down to see Mr. Compton and try for the business. You'll hold your place here whether you get this order or not, but if I don't nail something and nail it pretty soon it means that I lose my position right at the worst time of the year.

"If I can get Mr. Compton to give me this business—and I'm sure he'll favor me if it is at all possible—why, then I'll be away over the quota required for the first six months and that means that little Irmie can go to the mountains for a spell. And her mother can go along with her. I know it's a lot to ask," Devins concluded, seeing something in the other man's face which told him that the Standard Remedy order meant more than the commission involved, "but I felt that once you knew how desperately I needed the business just now and how much good the money I might make on the order will do the two people on earth who are nearest and dearest to me, you would not hesitate to give me my one big chance to make good."

For a while after Devins finished speaking, Mort sat in silence and stared at the empty pigeonholes of his desk. His heart went out in sympathy to the ungainly youth seated near him and were it not for his earnest resolve to beat Blake's sales record and thereby prove that he still possessed the ability to sell goods, he would have turned the Standard account over to Devins without a moment's hesitation. But now he conjured up before his eyes a vision of Mary Brandon coming to his desk the following Friday night, placing a slip in front of him and then turning away in disgust. His thoughts switched to Blake; of how he would gloat; of the sarcastic remarks that he would utter; and of what he would have to say to Mary Brandon during those long walks to the car.

On the other side of the scale, as a balance and as a compensation for his sacrifice and subsequent mental anguish, stood Devins—Devins, to whom he hadn't spoken ten words previous to to-day, but who had a sick wife and child who needed the country air. If he handed over the Standard account the transaction would be between himself and Devins. No one else in the office would know anything about it, not even—and here Mort winced —Mary Brandon. All that she would see was that Devins, after only a few month's experience at selling, was able to land one of the biggest contracts ever brought into the office, while Mort, handling the one line practically all his life had fallen down again. With an involuntary groan Mort put his hands up to his eyes, as one who would shut out an unwelcome vision.

Suddenly he turned and caught sight of the expression on Devins's face. Never had he seen such a mingling of hope, fear and despair on a human countenance as was reflected in the eager, wistful features of his fellow salesman.

To the everlasting glory of Mort Harley let it be said that, at sight of the look in

Devins's eyes, every selfish thought was utterly banished from his mind. With a smile that must have appeared even more forced than the one which Devins habitually used, he turned to the new salesman and said:

"The Standard Remedy account is yours from to-day on, old man. Buck in and play it to win. And you'd better have lunch with me to-day so that I can tip you off to exactly what's wanted. You know, I sat up all last night figuring the thing out and I may be able to put you wise to a few little twists that will help you swing the business."

If any pangs of regret still remained in Mort's mind at his sacrifice, they must have been quickly swept away on seeing the manner in which Devins's face lit up when told the account was his. He made a sad attempt to stammer out his thanks, but Mort stopped him with a gesture of his hand.

"That's all right, Devins," he said lightly. "It wouldn't have made any difference in my young and carefree life if I nailed the Standad business or not. Getting that contract would only serve to break my day up into such small pieces that there'd be no time left for me to have any fun. I'd be forced to run over to the Standard Company every day or so with a lot of rough sketches; then submit the finished originals; then get the color proofs O. K'd, and go to all the fifty-seven other kinds of bother that help take the joy out of life. So you see, I really ought to thank you for taking the thing off my hands. Now just trot along and meet me in front of Jerry's place at twelve-thirty for lunch. In the meanwhile I'll finish up the best of these rough ideas, all ready to go into the art department."

"Oh, by the way," Mort added, as Devins rose to go back to his desk, "you understand, of course, that this little transfer of accounts is just between you and me. No one else in the office need know anything about it."

With an earnestness that spoke well for his changed state of mind regarding the importance of getting orders, Mort spent the rest of the week calling on as many of his customers as he could possibly find time for. The Goddes of Luck seemed to have located his address at last, it seemed, for in the four days from Tuesday morning to Friday night he succeeded in closing an order a day, a happening which surprised him considerably but surprised old man Stoner still more, for that gentleman began to see in the performance hopes that the oldest man in point of service on his sales force was once more on his way to become the best man as well. Stoner had a half-formed notion as to what, or, rather, who, was responsible for the sudden metamorphosis, but whether he was right or not in his surmise troubled him very little. The sales sheets gave eloquent though silent testimony that a great change had really taken place in his one-time star and always favorite salesman, and that fact was enough for the old man.

Mort had no idea as to how Blake's sales for the week stood. He could not ask Blake, for he had not been on speaking terms with the "yes-sayer" for months back. He could not ask Miss Brandon, for that would only result in a verbal uppercut if Blake happened to be ahead. The only thing left was to wait for the bookkeeper to hand him his sales slip and then hear what she had to say. If Blake was leading Mort had no doubt at all but that Miss Brandon would be sure to make him acquainted with the fact.

Just before closing time Friday night, Devins came rushing into the office all excited, his eyes shining with joy and in his right hand a long rolled-up sheet of paper, which he waved wildly over his head as the door closed behind him.

"I've got it! I've got it!" he whooped at Tepler.

"Got what?" Tepler growled out, upset by the suddenness of the attack.

"That Standard Remedy Company contract!" Devins answered exultantly. "I nailed it for a whole year and the order amounts to $13,000."

Every salesman in the place but Mort left his desk and gathered around Devins at the news, for they all knew how badly the new man needed the business and all felt sincerely happy over the luck that had come his way.

While Devins was thus being congratulated on all sides, Mort sat at his desk pretending to be so very busy that he had not even been aware of the new man's entrance or of the news he had brought with him. But through his brain was running, in a mad refrain and over and over again: "What does she think? What will she say?"

He was brought out of his revery with a sudden jolt by hearing Blake exclaim, presumably to the new man, but in a tone loud enough for all to hear:

"Good work, Devins. You've done something in a few months that some fellows I know couldn't do after spending a whole lifetime in the business. But I suppose you'd rather work than shirk and believe in going out after the stuff instead of sitting at your desk and waiting for business to come to you."

There was no question as to whom Blake was referring, but Mort could only sit tight, bend his head far down over his work and keep on writing. He could not help thinking, though, that the order which prompted Blake's remarks rightfully belonged to him and he wondered what the "yes-sayer" would have found to crow about it Devins's request for the account had been refused and the order had been nailed by the man who was entitled to it.

For just one thing could he still be thankful. It was now past five and Miss Brandon had not as yet come to his desk with his sales slip. Perhaps she had relented in view of the week's showing, and would hereafter treat him as a regular member of the sales force.

But even this small comfort was to be denied him. The big clock in the Metropolitan Tower across the street had just rung out the first quarter after five, when Miss Brandon, fatal slip in hand, approached Mort's desk.

"I see we have another 'leech' in the office," she remarked, as she laid down the sheet of paper. "Another one of those fellows who gets his orders by plugging, but gets them, nevertheless, despite the fact that he has only been in the printing business a few months. And what strikes me funny," she went on, "is that these ordinary pluggers always seem to get four or five times more business than do the eighteen-carat, pure-blooded salesmen who have been selling printing nearly all their lives."

Mort had expected this arraignment and now merely sat with clenched teeth and bowed head, taking everything that Miss Brandon sent over. The presence of the sales slip on the desk irritated him and he picked it up in a half-dazed manner to place it with the others in one of the compartments. But so keenly had Miss Brandon's words affected him that his hand fumbled and his cuff, happening to strike several small pieces of cardboard that extended from a lower pigeon-hole, threw them out and scattered them all over the desk. These fragments happened to be the rough layouts for the Standard Remedy Company's window trim that Mort had worked on all of Monday night, and Miss Brandon, who was still standing beside the desk when the accident happened, could not repress a low exclamation of surprise as she saw what the sketches were and for what concern they had been intended.

A month passed, during which time more changes took place in the sales force of the Stoner Printing Company than had occurred during any two previous years of its existence. Soon after Devins nailed the Standard Remedy contract, Mort hit his stride with a vengeance, and the very next week ran into

a window display service lead for another concern which bloomed into a bigger thing when he finally landed it than the account he had passed over to the new man.

To add to Mort's cup of joy, Blake the sarcastic, suddenly handed in his resignation and left, the excuse being that he intended to go into business for himself. Office rumor, however, especially among the stenographers, had it that the real reasons for his sudden decision to leave were two in number: reason number one being that he was no longer star man, Mort having won back that honor and held on despite all that Blake could do to dislodge him; and reason number two being that Mr. Blake had asked Mary Brandon to marry him and had been given what the girls in the office were pleased to call "the frigid shoulder."

When the first of these rumors reached Mort's ears, it aroused in him a fiendish delight, especially on such occasions as he recalled all that he had suffered at the hands of the departed joy-killer. The second rumor puzzled him, for Mary Brandon, especially while Mort had been present, had always gone out of her way to say a pleasant word to Blake or to snatch a moment's conversation with him whenever the opportunity offered. And then they had nearly always walked to the car together.

But, after the fashion of a youth in love, he now made himself believe that Mary Brandon had never really cared for Blake, and comforted himself with a purely imaginary vision of Blake, certain of an affirmative answer, coolly proposing marriage to Mary Brandon, and of Miss Brandon drawing herself up to her full height, flashing her dark eyes on Blake and then scorching the conceit out of him with a few haughty words of refusal.

Mort could never hit upon the exact words Mary ought to use on this occasion, but he had been made the victim of her best efforts often enough to know that, if such a moment as he imagined had really come to pass, it might be safely taken for granted that Mary Brandon had acquitted herself nobly.

But gloat as he might over the discomfiture of Blake, there was no crumb of comfort for Mort in the way Miss Brandon was treating him, now that Blake had departed. True enough, the bookkeeper had long ago given up her Friday night visits to his desk and Mort now received his sales slip every Saturday morning—merely as a matter of form now, for he was so far ahead of his quota and had so many irons in the fire at one time, that it was almost an impossibility for him ever to fall behind again.

With the exception of a few words of congratulation, spoken the first time he led the office for the week, Miss Brandon merely handed Mort's sales statement over to him each Saturday morning and then, without comment of any kind, walked back to her desk. Mort, at such times, almost caught himself wishing for a return of the old days, when a heart-searing curtain lecture followed each presentation. It was far better, was his thought on these occasions, to suffer the torment of her sarcasm than to content himself, as he now had to, with just a stingy little smile and a brief "Good morning, Mr. Harley."

Nor did Mort have any better luck when, by what he deemed a cleverly arranged series of accidents, he met Miss Brandon at the door on her way home for several evenings in succession and walked with her to the car. The bookkeeper, on these occasions, was extremely reticent and Mort, though the thought was extremely bitter, could only come to the conclusion that his company was unwelcome to her.

Mr. Stoner's private office, situated at the extreme end of the salesroom, had two entrances. One of these, for the use of the office people, was through a sliding-door located directly in back of

Miss Brandon's desk. The second or main entrance opened from the reception hall and was for the use of visitors and members of the sales force.

It was through this main entrance, on a day which was destined to be marked with a red letter in Mort's memory for all time, that the new star of the office made a wild dash, intent on personally conveying the glad tidings to old man Stoner that he had just sewed up the McClory & Sons Fall catalogue.

Mort had walked half way across the narrow aisle which led into the office proper, when he heard his name mentioned by Mr. Stoner. Some person was with the boss, that much was evident, but who it was Mort had no way of telling, for the bend in the aisle hid the interior of the office from his view.

"Harley has certainly come back strong," the boss was saying. Mort stopped short, undecided whether to continue into the office and make his presence known to Mr. Stoner or go back.

The same instinct, however, which prompts every one of us weak mortals to strain our ears when we hear ourselves talked about, made Mort wait until Stoner had finished what he was saying.

"Yes, he's reaching his true form at last," the boss went on, "and if he keeps it up I wouldn't be surprised to see him run himself into a junior partnership here. Incidentally"—here Mr. Stoner spoke with great warmth—"I want to congratulate and thank you for what you have done to bring about Mort's reformation. Many's the day I've sat here at this desk watching you dig into that boy about the poor showing he was making, and after you had walked away I've seen him clench his teeth and get his old file-box out of the drawer with a bang. You certainly kept him mad enough to bite a piece out of a cannon all the time, and, whether you knew it or not, it was the very best thing you could have done."

"I know I treated him terribly," Mr. Stoner's visitor replied; and Mort joyously realized that it was Mary Brandon.

"He certainly must hate me for all I have made him suffer," the voice went on, "but it didn't take me long to see that he had the right stuff in him, and I made up my mind that the only way to bring it to the surface was to play up the success of Mr. Blake, even though I knew all along how much sales ability Blake really possessed.

"And Mort Harley surely has the right stuff in him, too, Mr. Stoner," continued the voice Mort loved so dearly. "I've told you about the Standard account and how he handed that big contract over to Devins, so that the new man's wife and child could go to the country for a rest, even though he knew that the action would not only give Blake a chance to gloat, but would also furnish me with an additional reason to make him miserable. And, to top it all, he pledged the boy to secrecy, and it was only when I saw the rough sketches on his desk and made Devins tell me where he got the account, that the truth of the matter came out.

"He's too far ahead now ever to backslide," Mary Brandon concluded, with what Mort was sure was a sigh, "and the only manner in which I can make atonement is to let Mr. Harley severely alone. There's nothing more I can do for him."

There was a pause in the conversation after Mary Brandon stopped speaking and Mort, torn between shame at having thus deliberately overheard what was not meant for his ears, even though the action was unpremeditated, and joy because he now realized that Mary Brandon knew and understood, walked quietly back to the reception-room again, but not before he had paused, glanced back to Stoner's office, and delivered himself of this joyous threat:

"You're all wrong, my little lady, if you think there is nothing else you can do for me. You can marry me, and you're going to do it, too, the first chance I get to ask you."

SUSPENDED ANIMATION

By WILLIAM DUDLEY PELLEY

HE traffic officer decided that when it came to driving an automobile I should go back to the Appian Way and take lessons on a mule in a chariot. Quite coldly he refused my exclamatory assurances of latent dexterity. He insisted I maintain it at the headquarters of Public Safety. This decided me that the party who wrote "Hail to the Chief Who in Triumph Advances," had in mind a corn-fed cop, crossing the street to take his license number.

But my friend, the officer, had rushed in where ward aldermen feared to tread. Instead of a sermon I got a cigar; instead of a cell he was sold himself. For, preposterous as it appears, his superior owed me a twenty.

"Have you any more specimens of law and order, corned-beef and cabbage," I requested, "whose brains put into a mustard seed would rattle round like a peanut in a wash-boiler?"

"Once in a while we get them," Chief Quilty admitted as I took a chance on his cigar. "But you're not so bad as Learny. There's where I agree that a bone-headed cop gave a gentleman chance for a grievance. You remember, a year ago his jewelry store was robbed on the night of all nights when he had the Hobart diamond in his safe?"

I remembered.

"Don't think that a trifle like an inconsideration of traffic rules gives you warrant to fricassee the police department. You should have seen the verbal lashing Learny gave me the following morning."

"You mean heard."

"I mean seen. Learny is a dumb man—writes his conversation on a pad. I put the compilation in my drawer and the desk caught fire. The boys said it was rats in my smoking matches. I said it was Learny's conversation. Well, sir, that famous robbery happened because I detailed a green Irishman to that beat, whose thought-box, under a microscope, would resemble the eye of a needle viewed from the wrong end of a telescope."

While I waited for the cigar to explode, this is the yarn that Chief Quilty told me:

At five o'clock on a drizzly afternoon, Casey, the nitro-glycerine artist, got word of the Hobart. Half an hour later he shuffled by Learny's, sandwiched between Sweeney's Undertaking Parlors and the Gem Theater.

Learny had the Hobart because Learny's was distinctive. First, for years he had catered to Our Best Families; second, his shop was of such titanic smallness that unkind competitors marveled how he added half-a-dozen stickpins to his stock without moving out his safe. Beware your jewelry store with the portals of a trust company. Many a hole in the wall houses a Kohinoor and a dozen dollar watches. Learny's was that kind of place.

Big as a Vermont farmer, stolid as the statue of the Civil War soldier and dirty as a modern Mexican, Casey reconnoitered with all the indifference of a man shopping with his wife at a corset department. In the course of getting his

bearings, he found that an alley lay behind the building, which contained three barrels, a crate of straw and a yellow dog.

To Casey's trained eye the outlook was excellent. The safety of the Hobart depended on the ignorance of anyone regarding its presence. How Casey came by his information is another story. At the moment it was peaches and cream to force an entrance to Learny's—for one who could drill his way through the side of a battleship.

Casey, satisfied, came from the alley and wended his way across the city. He entered the back room of a bar you would never suspect of being such.

While Casey waited in the rear room for Longfellow to waft down the feathered darkness from the wings of a murky evening, the Frisco Kid entered. He arrived in time to become chief mourner at the obsequies when Casey buried his face in a beer. The Frisco Kid walked on the balls of his feet, his collar was up and his shoulders were rounded. His voluminous cap looked like a jockey's in front and an Indiana woman's market basket behind. The visor and the collar were evidences that we wanted the Frisco Kid badly and the Frisco Kid knew it.

The Frisco Kid spotted the protuberance that meant cold steel on Casey's hip.

"Some day, bo," he remarked in a horse whisper, "you'll get de pen carryin' too much wet freight on the job."

"Kid," rejoined Casey, "it's a wet night and the job on the hoof ain't breakin' into no Turkish bath."

"A jimmy and Extra Dry ain't Siamese twins, Casey," the other warned. "When you're puttin' de fricassee on trap rock in de interests of de good roads' movement, you'll curse Milwaukee like dat jane, W. C. T. U. Safety First, bo."

The Kid scowled further when, an hour later, he saw Casey tuck a pint on the hip.

"I'm all right," Casey answered; "think if I whittled off dem hinges and found the tray filled with four postage stamps and a bent cent."

When Casey went out, the Kid followed.

A cold, dank, clammy drizzle filtered in front of an eye of light later that night in the rear of Learny's. The cellar window went out and Casey in. Slipping from the downpour he landed on a pile of ashes.

Picking his stealthy way over crates, bales and boxes, Casey blinked his demon's eye and found the stairs. "A cinch," said he. "Easy as smellin' garlic on a wop."

He mounted the stairs. Thereat came the first effect of the liquor, for he ascertained with a dull phrenological bump, that the aperture in Learny's was covered with a trap door dictated by a building inspector who had to earn his money.

"Locked!" he exclaimed thickly, and laboriously he sat on the second stair and laid out his tools.

Well, at one o'clock he had jimmied the door, thrown it up and climbed through. Very carefully he poised the heavy section of flooring against the wall.

He shifted his flash so he could have a pull on the pint on his hip. Right here Casey made his second mistake, his first being the day when Dandelion Casey had accepted the belief that booze and burgling were comrades in this vale of tears. The flashlight slipped from shaky fingers, rolled along to the edge of the flooring and fell with such a crash to the cement beneath that the infinitesimal bits of glass couldn't be found with a Yerkes telescope or a janitor in bare feet.

Casey cursed and felt in his pockets for a match. As he did so, the trap door answered the draft between the transom and the mutilated cellar window and came down into place with the dexterity of a miser's strong-box when its owner hears a prowler.

From Casey's standpoint, here was a predicament.

On the floor above knelt one strong and perfectly healthy burglar, his system fairly bursting with burgle. Two feet below, on the cellar stairs, was his kit of tools, and farther down, in seventy thousand pieces, was his only source of illumination. Between them was a trap door without a handle—and Casey in the next three minutes made the discovery that he had no matches.

The nitro-glycerine artist rolled onto the seat of his trousers and addressed the bowels of darkness.

"I have feelings in me boozum," says he, "like a priest calling on a woman with a profane parrot. Side of me the feller who gets up the flivver car jokes is bright enough to run for guv-nor of New York on the Prohibition ticket—and get elected. I belongs in an insane asylum for idiots!

"Sufferin' cats!" he went on, after vainly fumbling in the darkness. "Do they send for a carpenter every time they want to coal up the furnace? Or do they climb through the cellar windows from the outside and raise it with their heads?"

Casey was caught, trapped, frustrated. He had suddenly become the bold, bad burglar who couldn't break out. I mention this because he was sitting thus in dark, meditating, when through the semi-darkness came the lift of a door-latch in front, followed by a jest and an answer. A night-watchman sat in the entrance outside, the tip of his midnight cigar paragraphing the darkness. He had joked with the roundsman testing the doors.

If ever a burglar was between William Travers Jerome and the deep blue sea, it was Casey. Cut off in the rear and guarded in the front, the artist sought still further consolation at his hip.

"The stunt to do," soliloquized Casey, "is to explore this doghouse. If a guy can't go forwards or backwards he can always go up in the air. Maybe there's a fire escape."

As he rose stealthily, he saw a showcase before him. He felt his way along the edge and paused when it ended abruptly.

"What kind of cases," he demanded, "is empty of glass on the top? Is this where they keep the ten-cent jewelry or did John D. come in for a stick-pin and lay down his wad on the glass?"

Casey's shaking hand felt around the edge. Then in natural sequence he ran it down among the baubles.

Shades of Edgar Allen Poe!

Casey's trembling fingers encountered a motionless human face!

In South Dakota there is a waterfall that drops three hundred thousand gallons of water per second one hundred and ninety feet. Comparisons may be odious, but in Peter Sweeney's Undertaking Parlors was a lugubrious safe-blower whose forehead beat the record by a pint. Moreover, the water was icy cold.

"D. T's of Saint Patrick!" chattered Casey, "has I jimmied into a morgue for corpses or has the proprietor installed a wax-works?"

Richard III. offered his kingdom for a positive high-power automobile. Casey I. would have bartered his immortal soul for a single measly match. Yet with the cold chills of the Thing he had felt still tingling on his arm, he knew he could no more light it than a mere husband a Christmas cigar in the Elk's.

"Wives of the saints!" he stuttered hoarsely. "I'm in the wrong cellar and come up in the undertaker's." Again he felt for the flask. "I got to get out of this if I strain a lung," he continued. "I wonder if there's furniture enough lying round loose to hoist me to them side windows?"

He was feeling around among the empty coffins when he suddenly paused, like Cæsar with his nightshirt full of holes.

Someone was again jesting with the watchman. This time it was not the roundsman, for a key was turning in the lock.

Frantically ascertaining that the nearest coffin was empty, Casey had barely time to stumble up and stretch himself at full length in a happy inspiration of concealment. The next instant the apartment was flooded with a blare of light.

Peter Sweeney employed a clerk named Bean—Reginald B. Bean. His middle initial stood for Blannerhasset, not Baked. He had sore feet, pimples on his face, and wore his hair in the cut of 1888. By this, despite his name, you may know he was a dead one—which may have had something to do with his employment in an undertaking establishment.

Reggie had been sentimentally employed, it being Wednesday evening, and his homeward way led past the location of his daily employment. It happened that as Reggie's tongue had been more or less glued to the roof of his mouth during the evening, by the time he arrived opposite the parlors he was assailed by a most tremendous thirst. As he had a key to the establishment, he had crossed the street for a drink.

He nodded to the watchman and informed him he was making his nocturnal visit for a drink of *Aqua Pura*. The watchman took this for some new brand of Crow and grinned socially in at the door.

Thus it happened that Reginald passed within eighteen inches of Dandelion and went his way to the rear sink for water, while the watchman, unallowed for by the burglar, stood staring expectantly down the long run of the undertaking apartments.

What the watchman saw was this:

The face of a man—white as the make-up of a movie actor—bob upward from the longest, blackest casket in the lot and stare the watchman in the eye.

The watchman blinked six times, swallowed twice, grabbed the door frantically, and for a moment had a long neck.

Casey saw three things: The open door, the helplessness of the astonished watchman, and the fact that, having given his presence away, he must now break and run.

With one leap he was out of the box and with legs unsteady from liquor, descended on the doorway and the watchman.

The watchman stood transfixed, held it for three seconds, then fell back on the walk with a howl resembling an Irish comedian trying to yodle.

Casey, having the doorway to himself, utilized it for purposes for which such apertures are made.

Then the watchman found his voice—likewise sundry fragments of the English language.

"Reggie, Reggie!" he bellowed. "Your corpse is out and he's drunk as a lord!" With which astounding information, the watchman took after the figure fleeing unsteadily through the drizzle.

By the time Reggie reached the door, burglar and watchman were half a block away and still going. After them sped the day clerk, somehow deeming it a species of larceny that any of the stock should take unto themselves legs and fly away.

And here comes in this green cop—Barney Flanerty. Barney was young, new on the force and filled with a hallucination to rise in the world. He had landed at Ellis Island a couple of weeks previous and a friendly alderman had secured him a job on the police force. Barney was put on the beat the night that Learny's had the Hobart because we thought a green man would watch that place with a greater sense of responsibility than an old one.

Flanerty, therefore, on beholding three flying figures through the night from the vicinty of Learny's, stopped the spinning of his night-stick and started in pursuit.

"What's up?" says he, catching the flying jumper-tails of the watchman.

"One of Sweeney's corpses is loose," bellows the watchman, "and he's gettin' away!"

"And what are yez chasin' him for?" Flanerty wants to know as he joined exertions abreast with Reggie and the other.

"His relatives may sue us for damages if we lose him," sobbed Reggie. Somehow, he felt that if he had not left the door open the subject would have remained deceased.

"Who is he?" persisted Flanerty.

"Must be Old Tolliver. Died of some funny heart trouble. Probably it's started pumping again. They call it suspended animation.

"Suspended what?"

"Suspended animation."

"Oh," said Barney, divided between confessing his medical ignorance or running in Reggie instead as a lunatic.

Casey dodged the iron girders of an elevated stairway, ducked behind a dump-cart of norturnal street cleaners and darted into an alley. Half a dozen pedestrians had joined the chase.

With a liquor-fogged heart shrieking for a breathing spell, the burglar at length made Hogan's Saloon—otherwise known as Paddy's Suds Parlor. Tony, the bar-boy, was scrubbing the floor. The floor was smooth with the suds, but not the kind Paddy wiped off the bar. In two strides Casey's feet had become unmanageable. In two more they had left the floor and, with an enormous grunt, he not only landed on the back of his head, but slid in this particular position for several feet.

"They're chasin' me, Tony," says he, "because I'm a corpse that objects to the burial. And I've a splinter in me embalmed back that feels like a red-hot poker working inward with the tenacity of cactus. Swear you ain't seen me while I duck downstairs."

But Casey lingered too long elucidating. Officer Flanerty bore through the door, poised on a greased shute, nearly allowed both feet to reach the gas-jet and bounded twice.

"Yes are oonder arrist!" he bellows, hanging to Casey's disappearing ankle.

"Under what rule of the department do youse arrest a guy for not wanting burial with his boots on?" demanded Casey.

Flanerty got unsteadily to his feet, gyrated again and sat down. Still seated, he scratched the back of his head. The balance of the hounds arrived at this moment, belated but zestful to be in at kill—all but poor Reggie. Reggie had smashed head-on into the street-cleaner's dump-cart and had been rushed off to an emergency station.

"Stop yez jammin'," roared Flanerty. He turned to Casey. It had suddenly penetrated his diamond skull that the Book of Rules read: "Patrolmen when in doubt should make the arrest on suspicion and investigate later."

"Explain it to th' sergeant," he commanded, getting to his feet with Casey in one hand and his battered helmet in the other.

And to the station house he dragged him, though it took fifteen minutes to get him there. Flanerty had not yet learned the curves of "th' little talk-box on th' shtick," as he designated the patrolman's telephone, and totally ignored the function of the Black Maria.

To the desk man he produced him, battered but triumphant. Bill, the blotter clerk, did not look up as he reached for his pen.

It was Flanerty's first arrest. He drew himself up proudly.

"What's the charge, Officer?" asks Bill.

"Dishturbin' th' peace with animated suspenders," announced the victorious Flanerty in a loud voice.

"What?" exclaims Bill the desk man.

He looked up and recognized the officer. Then Bill grew apoplectic.

"So it's *you!*" he roared. He arose so quickly his chair thumped over behind him.

"'Tis me," confirmed Flanerty, beaming.

"You bet it's you, and if it ain't your last night on the force I'll turn over my job to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Irishmen. You've been off your beat half an hour. And we've just got word that the Frisco Kid has improved the opportunity to get away with every darned sparkler in Learny's safe."

There was a dull, heavy thud before the deskman's blotter. It came from Casey, the burglar. The information was the blow that stunned. Prostrate he lay before the bewildered policeman's feet.

"Now," demanded the irate Bill, "what's the matter with him?"

Flanerty was divided between the staggering information about Learny's burglary and the prostrate man.

"Somethin' tells me," he blurted forth, "his animated suspenders must have bursted, sorr."

NEW TABLE FOR LIQUID MEASURE

3 dollars—1 pint.
3 pints—1 quart.
7 quarts—1 gallon.
3 gallons—1 party.
2 parties—1 doctor's bill.
3 doctor bills—1 bankruptcy.
2 bankruptcies—1 reform.
2 reforms—1 grouch.
2 grouches—1 backsliding.
3 backslidings—1 new drink.

—Don Marquis.

THE HEEL OF MAMMON

By WILL SEBELLE

THE managerial duties of John Bryne began to pall on him. Not that the affairs of the Western Empire Telegraph Company were going badly, not that he was not intensely interested in the fascinating calling he found himself engaged in, but because of the fact that, since the company's amalgamation with certain unscrupulous telephone properties and the injection of many new faces into officialdom, there had started to come to him, from day to day, many undesirable exactions.

He pondered the matter at his desk one morning. He saw about him a great network of system, clerks, receivers, ushers, stenographers, telephone girls, his own assistants, outside men, and in a far corner of the office, neat in their uniforms, the messenger boys. All were busy; all seemed to have caught the contagion of generative force in that they moved about as if actuated by electricity.

On his desk was a heap of correspondence, a big heap, the morning's mail in which he knew were divers subjects, ranging from petty complaints to more complicated matters, perhaps a claim or two for damages, all of which he must analyze and act upon. Aside from the mail there was a second stack of papers, smaller in bulk, and from this daily stack first emanated the pall. It was the interoffice correspondence from eight dominating superintendents who occupied offices on the floors above, the new faces in officialdom who harried his soul.

In the course of his pondering, he pondered the superintendents. The majority of them, under very heavy pay, held sinecures. He looked at the correspondence over their signatures. They were brain-pickers, and he knew it was his brain they picked; also he groaned as he thought of the expense to the division their positions represented. They were men of apparent leisure, and their leisure brewed insufferable schemes for him to work out. The ideas they gleaned were treated by them as being strictly original, were reduced by them to writing and most respectfully referred from one to the other, each in turn adding some slightly pertinent remark, in writing. When the papers had descended rung by rung the ladder of the most "respectables" they were dumped by an office boy on his desk. They were his in addition to his correspondence and network of system and trials, his not only as expressed thoughts in written words, but for the necessary hard work, for the exactions demanded, for a successful handling of the details that were against his sense of justice and ideas of his duty as a man. And all since the Western Empire had ceased to be a dominant stock on the market, and since it had been taken over by the big telephone properties and the new faces had been politically shunted into remunerative, sinecure positions, since the fascinating calling of telegraphy had been subjugated to telephony by the big man of the system in the East.

A telephone call interrupted his meditations. A branch complained about the time taken by the "main" to answer.

"More system," he sighed as he hung

up the 'phone, recalling that the network included also some thirty branch offices about the city.

He issued a few instructions, summoned his stenographer and started the first step in a physical clearing of the correspondence. It was weary, stupendous work, this conjuring of ideas to placate complainants, to gloss obnoxious instructions, to marshal parcel after parcel of red-tape investigations into a trend of thought that would result to the advantage of his company. It was intricate work, taking in every angle of the business; and what he could not draft into the shape of a letter, because of mixed details, because he could not set the thing off in writing as he would like to have it understood, he shoved into his coat pocket so that he might call and present the case in all its effulgence, with the added charm of his voice and personality. Many such cases went into his pocket. He talked on, smoothly, effectively. After two hours the papers on his desk dwindled to a few. With a good-natured smile he finished dictating.

He had a number of penciled notes to look up, telephone complaints that had interrupted his dictation at different times, and these, before he went out, would have to be attended to. He looked at the slips, preparatory to starting for the upper floors of the building to the different departments concerned. Again the telephone rang. One of the higher officials wanted some statistical data. He drew a book from his pocket in which it was kept, a book containing data very often compiled at night, away from the noise and jangle and tense atmosphere. He ran his finger over the index, opened the book and gave the superintendent the information required. Then he reached for his hat and started for the elevator. But before he got to it he had to answer queries regarding technical points from a few heads of departments, had to decide on points where there existed a difference of opinion, where the rules seemed ambiguous or elastic. Then there were the usual number of important persons edging near the counter to talk to him, who, with their affairs, imagined that no one but the manager could wait on them. One after the other he listened to their benalities and, even though terribly bored, he beamed on them in apparent gladness of heart and sent them on their way with the very firm convictions that all went well with the world. He escaped to the elevator.

On the way to the operating room on the fourteenth floor, from which point he would start and work down his notes, he thought quickly and deeply. A dull ache in his head flashed to him the thought that he could not much longer endure the strain. There was a peculiar feeling in that dull ache. It felt as if his brain were about to snap. Also, he thought of his little twenty-acre ranch in the country, his little prune and apricot ranch that he had bought many years before for one hundred and fifty dollars an acre, and which was now worth five hundred an acre, and yielded him an income of two thousand dollars a year. It was a pleasant, soothing thought. If things grew worse instead of better he could—

"Top floor, sir."

The elevator man awoke him from his reverie; the staccato din of hundreds of telegraph sounders impressed upon him once more his errand.

In the operating-room he encountered trouble afresh. Sleet storms in the East had weighed down the wires and snapped them. The long circuits to Chicago, New York and Boston were cut off. A tremendous stack of old business was being spread to the shorter relay wires, Los Angeles, Denver and Kansas City for clearance. Excitement prevailed. He found himself in the same tense atmosphere he had left on the main floor. Four of the superintendents moved about and complained to him of many things they imagined to have gone askew. He

almost wished he was the chief operator, or a traffic chief, who had no time to stand and listen to criticisms, being too busy restoring the leased wires and balancing up the long "trolley" of the Union Press. In a short time he was rushing about, directing, working, mixing the physical and practical with the mental. He had removed his coat and was standing near the main switchboard, plugging in and testing sets. He noticed at the end of the board three plugs under a single spring. Some one had placed them there, probably for a short test of some kind, in a very careless manner. A few feet away a young girl was stamping sent business. With each smash of the canceling stamp on the jutting counter beneath the switchboard the plugs shook. He started for them, to make them more secure. His half-extended hand stopped as if frozen in midair. A plug had popped out, as he had seen watermelon seeds popped from between the fingers. He held his breath and his teeth clenched as he watched the course of the pointed brass instrument on the end of its flexible green line. A scream pierced above the staccato roaring. The young girl with the stamp was spinning around in pain, stooping, holding a hand over her right eye. He recovered his breath and carried her squirming and crying to a chair near the tubes. Her hand raised for a moment. He caught a glimpse of her eye. It was damaged, badly damaged; also it was bleeding.

Came lean days for the top-heavy, life-crunching octopus. He saw this. His superiors in officialdom brought it vigorously to his notice. He called their attention to the increased gross receipts, and the very note that invited attention to this fact was returned to him with a few biting remarks about the decreased net; and he knew to explain it would practically mean the explaining away of their sinecure positions, and he felt that their future attacks would be the more bitter should he attempt it. There was only one thing to do—get more business; it made no difference how; get it. Nor could he convince them that their rival, a smaller and independent company, because of its better ordered system, its superior service, unhampered by bucket-shop, railroad and telephone business, because of a concerted canvass, was making inroads upon the receipts of the Western Empire; also he knew that it was useless to invite their judicial attention to the fact that a number of wireless companies were fighting for a share of the business. In addition to his trying and onerous duties in the office and offices, and in addition to settling cases on the outside, he wearily trudged from office to office, from firm to firm, urging that his company be given an increased file of telegraphing. His days were long and tedious; his nights restless.

Of late, somehow, his mind dwelled often on the little twenty-acre ranch that amounted to more than a competency; often he would pause and think the thing over, as if trying to decide a question.

He began studying the human side of the great organization a little closer, the little congruities that made for comfort. He even suggested different changes to promote sanitation, shorter hours for a number of the wornout, and increased pay for the deserving. All of which were turned down with a promptness that startled him.

He kept on with his campaign for better conditions. He even remembered that eight weeks before little Viola Pickering had been injured. He brought himself bolt upright in his chair when he thought that during those eight weeks no one had called to see her on the company's behalf. Her place had been filled; there the company's interest in her ended. Such, he knew, would be his treatment when he came under the heel, when the dull ache in his head became unendurable, when the snap came. He

decided to call on her immediately, to ease his own conscience, if not the company's, and because — well, his own daughter was just about Viola's size.

A grim surprise awaited him at her mean-looking, ramshackle little residence. Viola had wasted away; she was but the ghost of the former vigorous girl he remembered as having worked in the operating room; too, she wore a green cover, and he was horrified to learn that the green shield covered nothing but an empty socket. He felt weak, nauseated, and sat down.

Her mother came in. They had had a hard time with Viola; she, herself, was about ready for her bed, because of the trial and long-sustained strain of it all. But she and John were sanguine now; things were on the mend.

During his cheer-inspiring little talk with them, he was interrupted by the entrance of a young man, a very sturdy young man with a determined face and dark, reasoning eyes. He was introduced to him, to John Paul Jackson, attorney at law, fresh from college, just starting his practice. Little by little it was discovered to him that John and Viola were lovers, had been since long before he went to college. He listened in courteous attention to the mother's recital of how they had been neighbors, how the love affair began, and many little episodes in their lives, commonplace enough to him, but sacred to them in that they were mellowed with sentiment.

As if in return for the confidence reposed in him, and to the delight of Mr. John Paul Jackson, he, as no other could, told how the hurt was received, of the condition leading up to it, even to the arresting of his hand in midair when the brass point struck, and the catching of the screaming, spinning girl. He did not see the look of satisfaction that came into the eyes of the young man, so intent was he in presenting the happening before their eyes in the right light, in the proper pitch of voice. With a few concluding words of comfort, he shook hands all around and left.

John Bryne, weary, meditating the worthlessness of it all, comparing his responsibilities with the Western Empire with those that would be his on the little ranch, thinking of the methods of one against the methods he would use on the other, sat silently a few minutes at his desk. The dull ache was troubling him again. He felt that he needed fresh air, needed rest, quiet repose. He saw a legal envelope before him. Slowly he opened it. Notice from Attorney John Paul Jackson advised him that action had been started by him on behalf of his client, Miss Viola Pickering, against the Western Empire Telegraph Company in which a judgment would be prayed for for a tremendously large amount of money because of injury resulting from criminal negligence. A sad smile flickered over his face. He wrote a few words on the notice and sent it to the offices above.

It interested him immensely to watch the action taken on the notice. It caused a little flurry, not only because it was for damages for something other than loss sustained by reason of faulty telegraph service, and was therefore beyond the limitations of the agreement on the back of telegraph blanks, but because it was a case wherein a jury would be biased from the outset and from which case a very adverse legal precedent might be established.

During the hard, tyrannical days that followed, he was more or less in touch with the company's attorneys and saw the defense as it was welded day by day, word by word. He pondered its main point, that the defendant had not been notified of the exact nature of the injury and, therefore, was deprived of the opportunity of sending its own physician who, undoubtedly, could have saved the eye. In a diplomatic, indirect way, he was coached as to just what it might be well to remember and what not to remember.

It was the day of the trial. Into a crowded court room he edged his way. He bowed to a number of acquaintances and sat down. Counsel for both sides were already in their places at the long counsel table, their bulk of evidence, briefs and citations before them, each facing the other, ready for the fray. He noticed the dissimilitude of the two attorneys, Jackson for the plaintiff, tall, dark-haired, his face pale and determined; Myron Shainway for the defense, old, hirsute, crafty of eye, gifted in oratory and the invidious faculty of presenting wrong facts in the right light.

The judge appeared, erect, dignified, a solem judicial air attending him. He took his chair, spoke to the clerk of the court and the court reporter. A few lawyers addressed him, estimated how long it would take to try their cases, heard him set the dates and left. It became very quiet; even the jurymen ceased whispering.

"Case of Viola Pickering versus the Western Empire Telegraph Company," was called.

"Ready," snapped Jackson.

"Ready," assented Shainway.

John Bryne saw John Paul Jackson advance in respectful poise before the judge; heard him start his prayer for damages, explaining in a sincere, convincing tone of voice what evidence he would submit and what he would prove beyond any shadow of a doubt. Criminal negligence, crass, downright, irrefutable, was charged. He saw little Viola Pickering take the stand, timorously, frightened by the graveness and majesty of the law. He listened to her testimony, and to him there came an appreciation of the smallness of the concern for which he worked. Shainway cross-questioned, craftily, leadingly, but found that Jackson was depending on nothing but the truth as a foundation for his case, and that his witness was speaking it for him from the stand.

Throughout the day he listened to the fighting argument of the younger man, heard a just and proper arraignment of the Western Empire, its appraisal of human life and rights; also the expert testimony of an eye specialist who declared that the eye could not have been saved. All through his argument he noticed that Jackson was trying to establish the negligence of the defendant on the point that it had no legal right to place three plugs under a spring that was made for only one, much less to carelessly, criminally so place those three plugs that they shook and finally popped loose with injurious results.

He heard Myron Shainway object and give as grounds for the objection that counsel for the plaintiff was presuming on the evidence; that there was nothing to show that three plugs had been placed under a single spring, nor that, if they were so placed, which was not admitted, that they were so loose they shook.

The superintendents near Bryne laughed; they were pleased with the remarks of their counsel. He felt a hand tap him on the shoulder and a voice whisper in his ear:

"You're the only person who knows there were three plugs under a single spring, and that they were there in a careless manner, and it's a fat chance they've got to get us on that point, eh?"

He said nothing. His mind was running back over a score of things. He looked upon the delicate features of little Viola Pickering, then at the determined young man, her future husband, who was impressing the jury with his first case, with the virile fight he was making. And yet the Western Empire would trample them under, if it could, on the ground that they had not been notified of the exact nature of the injury and therefore were deprived of the services of their own doctor who, undoubtedly, they alleged, could have saved the eye, and the further allegation that no negligence existed at the time of the injury.

He heard the Western Empire's coun-

sel attack the young man of the dark hair, dark eyes, fighting visage and name; saw that young man hurl the older attorney's words back at him with a piquancy and sting. As a result of the exchange, when quietude again settled, Bryne's name was called out. Before he left he heard the same voice at his ear again:

"Don't forget instructions!"

With right hand upraised he swore to tell the truth. On the stand the usual preliminary questions were asked. Automatically he answered them, his name, address, business, etc. While answering he noted the many smiling faces of those of the Western Empire. There seemed to be no doubt in those hardened faces but what the case would go as ordered. They were confident, unduly so, he imagined. He let his eyes seek and rest on the sallow features of little Viola Pickering. She was being comforted by her mother. He could not long look upon her. Something seemed to grip at his heart; a choking sensation came up in his throat, and with it was born a potent hate for the Western Empire. There were but two things foremost in his mind, little Viola Pickering and his prune and apricot ranch. He was through.

John Paul Jackson finished rummaging through his reference papers. With one in hand, he addressed the witness:

"You remember the conversation you had with the plaintiff, her mother and myself?"

"I do."

"I'll ask you if you did not, at that time, say that it was grossly improper to place three plugs under a single spring?"

Profound silence ensued. The judge was busy writing. The scratch of his pen was heard very plainly.

"I did."

"And as a matter of fact, did you not further state that in addition to the plugs being improperly placed there, that they were caught under a single spring in a very careless manner, that they were so loose they shook?"

"I did."

There was an uproar. Myron Shainway was on his feet objecting; the men of the Western Empire conversed in low, serious tones, continuously casting quick, malevolent glances at the witness. The objection was overruled.

"Care to cross-examine the witness?" asked Jackson, smiling at Shainway.

"No!" Shainway snapped his answer.

"That is all," the young attorney said to the witness.

THE sun was just sinking behind the hills. A man in farmer's dress stood admiring the sight. In one hand he held an empty sack, from which he had, but a few minutes before, thrown feed to the poultry; in the other hand he held a pipe which he puffed occasionally. The sun sank. He turned and with a sweep of his eyes took in the acres and trees about. The deep breath of cool, fragrant air he drew in amounted to a sigh of satisfaction. He started for the house. Near the back door he lingered by some vines. The door opened. His wife came out. In her hand was the evening paper.

"John," she said, "I do believe you are looking better already." She came close to him and pressed the paper into his hands. "Read that," she suggested, pointing. He read the heading:

BIG DAMAGES AWARDED WESTERN EMPIRE EMPLOYEE

"God bless the world," said John Bryne.

The girl who marries for the purpose of getting a home sometimes takes in a boarder.—*New York Evening Journal.*

DEAR DEER

By GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND

HE cadaverous, well-dressed city stranger, huddled in the splint-bottomed r o c k e r on the porch of Dudley's General Store, hoisted one lean leg over the other and cast a look of profound melancholy at Uncle Forexample Meloon. The stranger looked like a sick man. And right here let us explain that Uncle's initials were E. G., which explains why people called him "Forexample," commonly shortened to "Forry."

Uncle Forry looked sad, too. Almost as sad as the city stranger. When Uncle looked sad, just that way, the Calais people knew what was coming. So some of them moved away. But others gave ear.

"An' all I done, after all," Uncle declared, "was a favor for that 'tarnal Cousin Henry o' mine, down to Boston." He dragged at the ripe cob, and scraped the sandpapery chin with the gnarled paw. His cheeks hollowed and his blue eyes glinted from under the old, white-thatched brows. "That's all, mister. Every nameable thing. An' yet, see how it rimracked me!"

"I am listening, sir," remarked the stranger, in urbane tones. "Proceed with your narrative."

"Rimracked me," repeated Uncle Forexample, "because Aunt Vyeny's lawyer, that didn't know enough to lap salt, lawed me for damages he allowed I owed him on account o' my lawyer fallin' foul o' him an' fistin' him in Ben Billin's's barn. Ain't that enough to make your haslet curl? Jest because your Aunt Vyeny's best trunk, what you borrowed, gits busted hell-bent an' crooked, an' you buy her a new one an' she lets on 'tain't as good's the other, she laws you, fer spite. An' then the lawyers git fightin' an' your lawyer warms it to her'n, an' that buffle-brained idjit sues you an' collects a hundred—ain't that hell an' repeat? One hundred bucks! I ask you!"

The cadaverous stranger gazed on Uncle Forexample with hollow eyes, and commented:

"I am unable to state, sir. Your narrative appears to be a trifle confused, but I gather that there has been a disturbance of the rural *dolce far niente* in this vicinity. If you will kindly begin at the beginning and relate the incident, I may be able to judge of its *modus operandi*, so to speak. Precisely what causation contributed to the destruction of your aunt's domestic property?"

"Oh, that? Well, that's jest part an' parcel o' the whole razoo, that brung me troubles thicker'n fiddlers in Tunket. I'll tell ye, clear. I wouldn't of minded that part so much, nor even them ten dollars extry I had to pay Aunt Vy, if it hadn't of been fer her will. Ten dollars ain't no gret kill-or-cure. Chowder, no! Nor a hundred, neither. But changin' that will was enough to strike anybody all of a heap.

"When Vyeny was took—an' some say it was the rookus of havin' her best trunk smashed with them axes, an' gittin' all stewed up over lawin' me, that give her the capuluptic shock—why, both wills was found. Fust an' second. An' Jeems Rice! When they come to be read, I'd lost that fifty-acre mowin' lot, an' both

wood lots, an' five hundred cash. So you can see the mess I was in. I was at least a thousand an' a half out o' pocket, jest there alone, an' besides that my Cousin Henry got miffed because he allowed as how he never got the trunk, nohow, let alone the contents, an' he wouldn't pay me an all-fired cent."

"For what?" asked the cadaverous stranger, with increasing interest. "What was the nature of the transaction wherein you became so painfully involved?"

"Painfully is right, mister! On top of all that, that doggone cousin o' mine got a lawyer to write me, threatenin' to law me for damages for loss o' character an' public contumely, on account o' his havin' got mixed up with it an' his name bein' made a p'intin' an' a byword. Can you beat that? I ask you!"

"It would be difficult, indeed," the stranger admitted. "But now, returning to the point at issue, let me inquire what—?"

"An' that wa'n't all, neither, what my cousin slatted to me. He quit comin' down here, him an' his wife, as my summer comp'ny. Five seasons they ain't come, now. Prob'ly two hundred a season, five seasons, that's another thousand. I cal'late that makes my loss twenty-six hundred an' ten, so fur, not countin' my lawyer's bill about Aunt Vy's trunk. That bill was twenty-five. Twenty-six hundred an' thirty-five. An' by gull, we ain't begun, yit! You wonder I'm poor as pooduc, this minute? That doggone lawyer never *did* work for my int'rests, 'specially when he told Ben Billin's I was reely responsible for the barn burnin'."

"Ah, a barn burned, did it?" the stranger queried, leaning a little forward in his chair. "Now this is something tangible. And you were accused of being *criminis particeps*, so to speak? Well, kindly elucidate the barn."

"Hell's bells, mister! Can't you understand nothin'? M*y* lawyer kicked that lantern over, into a stanchel full o' hay, an' though the Volunteers come a-runnin' like all possessed an' got there in less'n fifteen minutes, it was all off with the barn. That was at the end o' the fight, like."

"Ah, I begin to get a glimmer of light! You say there was a personal encounter—?"

"Bet y'r boots an' resk it! It was some fall-out, mister! Y' see, Aunt Vy's lawyer an' mine met in the barn, an' her'n called mine a pestiferous shyster.

"Says he:

"'I'll make you take y'r back tracks about that there trunk, by crimus, afore ever you take it to court!'

"Mine says, says he:

"'It'll take a bigger man than what you be, Eleazor Tibbets, to do it. For two cents I'd dust your back. If I was as short o' brains as what you be, I'd git a job poundin' sand into a rat-hole!'

"'You meachin' cuss!' says her'n, he says, 'if ever I matt onta you, by the livin' laws! you'll wish you'd of got down on your prayer-handles an' took that back afore you said it!'

"Right then, my lawyer—Cyrenus Crabb, his name was—got mad an' fisted Eleazer as tight's he could jump for luck, an' knocked his uppers 'n' unders clean acrost the barn floor.

"'You try it on,' says he, 'if you think you can take me down! Say, you'd oughta be kicked to death by cripples, you had!'

"Eleazer, he was smaller'n Cyrenus, but withy. The wallop Cyrenus gin him got him madder'n snakes in hayin'. He gin one jump, grabbed holts, an' they both went to the floor.

"By gary, mister, that was some jeeroosly fight! Cyrenus tarnally laid it to Eleazer, who gaffled Cy by what was left of his hair, got him down an' pronged at him with t'other fist till he was all a gore o' blood. He'd of licked him, too, only Cy had better teeth, an' when he got Eleazer by the ear, that halted Eleazer, kind of. Eleazer, he ain't spleeny,

but you know how 'tis, yourself, when anybody bites half your ear off."

"I can imagine it might be far from Elysian."

"You're doggone right, it ain't! Right there's where the lantern got kicked over, though who done it, no tellin', which is maybe all that saves me from Ben Billin's comin' back on me for the price o' the barn. He's tryin' to, as 'tis. That case ain't settled yit. But I wun't pay! Can't! How can you git blood out of a stun? But it's Hell on parade, now ain't it? I ask you!"

"It seems to me, if you will pardon the observation," remarked the melancholy stranger, "that your narrative is becoming a trifle involved, not to say inverted, as it were. I do not as yet grasp the exact concatenation of this *cause célèbre.*"

"Huh?"

"I mean, the original incident which gave rise to such an extraordinary series of concomitant *malentendus,* so to speak."

"He means, what started it?" put in Ted Alden, who had been away to Saltmarsh College.

"Oh, that? Well, I comin' to that, now, as fast as I can, ain't I? Jo Beeswax, mister, don't crowd me! The way it all begun was like this—an' that's all part of how I got to be the most unpopular man in the county by an overwhelmin' majority, one spell. Because this here case set husband agin wife an' brother agin sister, like, accordin' as they took sides for an' agin me.

"Some claimed the fine was too heavy, an' others allowed it wa'n't, an' that I'd ought to of been fined twice the five hundred an' costs I had to pay. How much 's that make, now? Thirty-two hundred an' twenty-five, total loss so fur, ain't it? Yes, sir! Folks got as excited over it as a cat to a mouse show. Some said the ten days I laid there in Machias Jail, tryin' to git bailed out, served me doggone good an' right. Jay Re-co, but I was all in when I come out o' jail. Others vowneyed if it had been *them—*"

"My dear sir," interrupted the melancholy stranger, "pray spare me these inconsequential minutiae. They are quite immaterial to the prosecution of your narrative. Let us get at the *raison d'être,* so to speak. The *casus belli,* as it were!"

"No belly to it, special!" declared Uncle Forexample, smiting his patched knee and blinking into the late afternoon sun. "It was the en-tire corpse. An' as I was sayin', they wouldn't never of ketched me if I'd only of happened to of lived t'other side o' the line. Y'see, I'm tryin' to make this all plain an' clear, if you'll only listen an' not keep fubbin' in, every minute. Look, now! Canady's here." Uncle tapped an unseemly finger on one of the porch boards. "The States is here. This here is Calais, Maine, an' here's the St. Croix River, an' here's St. Stephen, 'cross the river is Canady. Well, now, don't you git it?"

The dejected stranger contracted puzzled brows.

"I may be dense," he declared, "but as yet a certain nebulosity appertains to the development of the sequences, which—"

"Gret Deludian! You *don't* see?" demanded Uncle, with some heat. "When I git that letter, I'm death-struck with worry. Wouldn't it strike a dread to anybody? I ask you! I don't dast stay to hum. No, I jest stivver 'cross the bridge, where I'll be safe a spell, anyhow. It was the en-tire carcass, remember. I go boardin' with my second cousin, Delano Simm—him that married—"

"The entire carcass?" demanded the dejected stranger. "Carcass of what?"

"—my wife's niece by her third husband. Yes, sir, I go an' den up with Delano, bluer 'n a whetstun, an' he hadn't ought to of overcharged me no such way, for merely harborin' a relative. Del he's as accomodatin' as a hog on ice, a'most!"

Uncle Forry was now well under way,

sweating freely, cob-pipe waving in air. "Ain't that an outrage, to take advantage of a poor fugitive from injestice? I'm there three weeks, at twenty per. That's sixty dollars, an' my bank account all shriveled up to a skrid. Gosh, I never was so druv in all my mortal life! Sixty dollars. That makes thirty-two hundred an' eighty-five. An' me right in sight of my own farm, an' every day huckin' it up an' down them railroad tracks watchin' my place, an' them doggone cunstables settin' on the international bridge, waitin' to snaffle me if I tried to go home! Say, ain't that hard fodder, mister? I ask you!"

"Very sad, indeed," the stranger admitted. "But now, returning to the original question, let me inquire how—"

"Them potato bugs, too, made it wuss. I had to watch 'em eat up any God's amount o' my plants. They fixed my crop so it wa'n't wuth a wroppin' 'round your finger. There ain't no way to reckon exactly how much I lost by them bugs, but it was *some!* An' all the time, me right in sight o' the shed where I killed him! Was I—?"

"You killed him?" demanded the lugubrious stranger. "You admit the *corpus delicti?*"

"Sure's shootin'! The corpus was in my Aunt Vyeny's trunk, an' I admit I put it there. I ain't never denied *that!* But is that any reason to persecute a man a'most to death? I ain't no gret of a hand to complain, mister, but I doggone nigh flew all to gosh, watchin' them potato bugs skivin' through my patch. I dunno's I ever had no bitterer minutes in my life, except mebbe when I got that there letter from my brother Abner, down to Portland, tellin' me the officers had got my name off the trunk."

Uncle Forry sighed deeply and raked his chin with a horny hand. The melancholy stranger leaned closer.

"The trunk, I perceive," he commented, "seems to have quite a rôle."

"Yes, that's what Abner said. When it rolled out on the platform at the Union Station, to Portland, that's when all the trouble began. Abner, he always done favors the same as you haul a hog out'n a scaldin'-tub—not because you love the hog, but because you expect to git somethin', later. He sent me a bill for ten dollars, for warnin' me. But all I ever gin him was five. That makes it thirty-two hundred an' ninety, which, added to the damages I had to pay for that sp'iled actress's clothes—"

"Ah, a new arrival? What spoiled actress?" demanded the stranger. "Where does this histrionic individual enter the maze of your labyrinthine lucubrations?"

"My which?"

"Explain the spoiled actress, will you, please?"

"Ain't none! It was her duds as was sp'iled, by the blood!"

"Indeed? What blood? Ah, I fear my reason is unseated!" The sad one pressed a hand to his brow, and glanced from one to another of the platform loafers. "Gentlemen," he appealed, "tell me the worst. Are you hearing the same things that *I* am?"

"It's all right, mister," answered Walter Gordon. "Unk always tells it this way, t'other end to. You'll git to the beginnin', if you'll only wait till the end. Giddap, Unk!"

"The blood, I tell ye!" Forexample asseverated, with some heat. "You ain't over 'n' above bright, I must say, if you can't follow me. The blood sp'iled her stage clothes, don't ye see? My brother told me somethin' about that in his letter, an' I found out later 'twas a heap sight wuss'n what he said. They must of been handsome riggin's, 'cause she lawed me for a thousand. But we settled for half o' that. How much 's that make, now?"

"Thirty-seven hundred an' ninety," announced Charley Noyes, who had been keeping score with a pencil on a roll of sheathing-paper. "You're twenty dollars

shy this time, Unk. Last time, at this place, it was—"

"Never mind about a paltry twenty dollars," put in the anxious stranger. "My mind is disturbed by larger issues than a slight pecuniary discrepancy. I am now dwelling on the *criminis causa.* How about this blood? What blood? Pray, elucidate!"

"What blood?" demanded Forexample, with great irritation. "Why, *the* blood, o' course! Here I give you the whole dognation story, straight's a string, an' you ain't got sprawl enough to foller me! *The* blood, what made all the touse. *The* blood, what run out o' my Aunt Vyeny's borrered trunk!"

"Ah!" sighed the stranger leaning back.. "Now we are becoming semi-coherent. The estimable Aunt Vyeny's trunk appears again, in the narrative, and some sort of circle is established. I begin to perceive a kind of tentative concatenation in these digressive divagations. The *crux historiae*—"

"Who's a crook?" demanded Unk, menacingly.

"I mean, the key to the mystery is obviously at hand. Pray, explain how the blood got into the best trunk of your excellent relative, now deceased—that is, sir, if you don't mind setting a fevered brain at rest?"

"Sure, I'll explain!" affirmed Unk Forry, with vehemence. "I been tryin' to, right along, but everybody's been buddin' in an' knockin' my story all wee-waw. I'd tell it slick's a ramcat, if you all would only lemme be!" Anger sat on his corrugated brow, and again he smote his knee. "When I'm doin' my doggondest to make it all plain, straightforrard an' logical, can't you shut y'r traps?

"When they seen that blood, they got right up on their shoe-taps an' figgered 'twas murder in the worst degree. Who wouldn't of? I ain't blamin' 'em for *that.* Abner, he told me what they suspicioned in his letter. The letter was kind of like this, as I remember:

"'Dear Brother:

"There's blue Hell to pay, an' you better come up 'mongst the missin' a spell. I see your name on the trunk tag, an' I recognized Aunt Vy's trunk, too, an' knowed you sent it. They're after you, with corked boots. You never see such a catouse as they had here, to the depot, when they was bustin' it open.'"

"Bursting what open?" queried the stranger. "The depot?"

"Hell's hinges, no! Aunt Vy's best trunk! Say, you city men may be long on for clothes, but you're sure dull when it comes to understandin' language. Ain't you got no education? Depot, nothin'! It's the trunk I'm talkin' about, my Aunt Vy's new trunk that I borrowed. It cost her—"

"Spare me the details about the monetary exchange value of the trunk, my friend. Pray, proceed to the inverted dénouement!"

"Eleven dollars an' a half, down to Herb Libby's! An' she got madder'n bulls in flytime when they rimracked it. Walter, he wrote me as per follows:

"'It made a mess all over the baggage-car, between Bangor an' Portland, an' just natchally sp'iled Daisie La Rue's reppytory of lingerry, bein' stacked up on Daisie's trunk, and when they throwed it off on the platform at the Union Station in Portland, there was such a crowd gathered that somebody pulled in an alarm. Then there *was* a rookus, an' don't ye doubt it!

"'One fire-engine, comin' along St. John street, hit a peanut cart right in front of Bert Hutchinson's house. You know Bert, what runs the New Portland Theater. The engine throwed the peanut cart through Bert's front window into his parlor, an' filled the piano with peanuts, an' I callate you'll have to pay damages on the piano an' the house, also make good on the peanuts.

"'Three women fainted at the depot, an' the police had to fight the crowd to keep 'em from gittin' crushed. You'll admit, yourself, they was justified in thinkin' it was a murder-in-a-trunk mystery. They got axes out o' the train, an' what's left of it ain't kindlin's.'"

"Left of what? The train?"

"No! The trunk!"

"Your pronouns are misleading, sir," the sad stranger mildly reproved. "Now, let us have the *causa rerum,* if you please."

"O' course it *did* look like murder," Uncle Forexample doggedly continued. "You can't blame 'em none for thinkin' that. Now, if I'd only of used an ile-cloth to of wropped up the body in, or dreened it well afore I packed it—but there! I hadn't of reelly never ought to of killed it, in the fust place."

"You are killing it in the last place, it seems to me," commented the lugubrious one.

"No, I reelly killed it in my woodshed, after it had et up about five dollars wuth o' my best shorts," affirmed Unk Forry. "I should of jest swallered them shorts—the loss of 'em, I mean—an' let it go, an' not shot it. That's where I made my fall-down—there, an' trustin' the sireen voice of my Cousin Henry, down to Boston, when he wrote me he'd pay fifty for it. This tryin' to do a favor, or make a dollar easy, is all bugbite an' moonshine. I've learned my lesson. It was closed season, you see."

"For cousins?"

"Sufferin' beeswax, no! For *deer!*"

"Dear deer, I call it," murmured Charley Noyes. Uncle Forry looked expectant.

The melancholy stranger sat a moment, in profound meditation. Then his mouth cracked into something vaguely resembling a grin. Extraordinary sounds began issuing from his throat.

"He's chokin'!" cried Walter Gordon. "Water!"

The stranger waved away the tin dipper in Carl Dudley's hand.

"No, gentlemen," said he. "I am not choking. I am laughing. This is a laugh."

"It's needs ile," remarked old Fred Spear. "Not water."

"I," resumed the stranger, "am Professor Alcibiades Honeywell, of Harvard. This is the first cachinnation in which I have indulged for more than eleven years. I have long been a victim of melancholia, given up to die unless I could laugh. I have traveled widely in search of the merriment that would save my life. That life, gentlemen, is now saved, and I shall reward my friend, here, for his narrative."

From his pocket the stranger drew a quarter, and handed it to Unk Forry.

Unk squinted at it, as it lay in his palm. Then he bit it, pocketed it, and fished up fifteen cents in change, which he passed to the stranger.

"Here y'are, mister," said he. "I'm a good jedge o' the value of a man's life. An', doggone it! I'm honest. I won't overcharge *no* man!"

In silence he arose and hobbled away. As he turned the corner by the blacksmith's shop, Ed Bean remarked:

"Ten cents clear money, eh? Well, that's 'bout what he evridges with that deer. A dime to a quarter a throw. Funny, ain't it, how a man that's been on the town thirty year, an' ain't never had twenty-five bones all at once in his whole life can think he lost thousands?"

"Ten cents clear money ain't so bad at that," put in Leonidas McCue. "For somethin' what never happened, nohow, it ain't bad at all."

In comparison to the Bolshevist, "the sweet, old-fashioned hobo," who frankly refused to work, but didn't demand to be paid for it, seems almost a blessing.—*Houston Chronicle.*

The bashful lover is just as liable to make a domineering husband as the fresh guy.—*New York Evening Journal.*

A TICKET HOME

By ESTELLE AUBREY BROWN

ROGER TEMPLE stood waiting at the door of his ranch house as Jose rode in from Maricopa through the soft, December twilight, with the week's mail tied to his saddle. He had covered the long, desert miles quickly, and Temple frowned as he laid his hand on the heaving sides of the horse his Mexican farmhand was striding.

"You rode too hard, Jose." Temple's usually kind voice was stern. "We are far enough behind with the farm work without having a horse go windbroke."

The Mexican shrugged obsequious shoulders as he handed Temple the packet of mail. "You sabe the sick man at Johnson's place, ten mile down the road? He die; to-day we bury him. His wife—she stop me this morning and say will I help dig the grave; so I stay."

"That's all right; I'm glad you helped the poor woman. But that is no reason why you should override one of my work horses."

"Si, I come pronto. Senora Temple, before I go, she tell me hurry back with her letter."

Temple's frown deepened as he quickly scanned his mail. Selecting a letter from the packet he entered the pleasing living room of the ranch house, his strong, browned face hard and set.

He found himself confronted with a face cold and determined as his own when he faced his slim, young wife across the lamplit table.

He tossed her the letter angrily. "Here's your ticket." The scorn in his voice rang in the quiet room. "I see you didn't have pride enough, after all, to keep you from begging charity!"

"Pride—charity!" Margaret Temple clutched the letter to her. "You talk of pride, when you give me your word and then break it! You promised me months ago I could go home for Christmas! I've counted on it and worked for it! Now at the last minute you tell me you can't afford it!"

"I can't," Temple said.

"Do you think it didn't hurt to have to write mother that my husband, after four years' hard work, couldn't afford to buy me a ticket to St. Louis? That it didn't hurt to have to ask her to send it to me, after I told her weeks ago that I was coming? If you loved me, if you didn't think more of your alfafa and hogs and irrigation ditches than you do of me, you'd borrow the money." Tears were imminent in Mrs. Temple's pretty eyes.

"We've gone over all this before," Temple answered wearily. "I've tried to explain how necessary it is that we ranchers unite to raise a fund to fight this increase in our water rate by the Association in Phoenix. We've got to—"

"The ranchers are fools to fight that Phoenix crowd. They've got the money and the power. You'll lose every cent you put into it."

"We've got to go into court"—Temple ignored her interruption. "It takes money, but we'll win. They thought we would sit and let them raise our rate and do nothing; they were mistaken."

"I'm sick and tired of listening to your irrigation troubles. It's just an excuse! You find money all right when

you want something, when you need more headgates or a new sulky plow."

"I have to have these things, dear. If we are to live here, and that lung of mine won't let me live anywhere else, we've got to make our living off the ranch. It's hard the first years; don't think I don't realize how hard it is for you. Your being willing to stick by me has been the only thing that makes the struggle worth while."

"Worth while to you, perhaps. But is it worth while to me when you give me your promise and then break it?"

"I'm sorry about the promise, dear. It can't be helped. When we go home we'll go together and go right. You need pretty clothes and things back there in the city. I want you to have them. Trust me, dear." Temple crossed over and took his wife in his arms. "Some day and soon we will go home, with rings on our fingers and bells on our toes."

Margaret Temple did not reply. Her husband drew the long folded ticket from her hand.

"Let me send this back to your mother, dear. I promise you won't be sorry. Let's have our Christmas here at home, just you and I."

"I can't!" She wrenched herself from his clasp. "I can't. You will break this promise, too. I've got to go. I've dreamed day and night of seeing them all—mother and Fanny's new baby! I'm going, Roger. Give me the ticket."

His face hardened into the old lines as he held it out to her.

"I told you not to write and ask for it. You've made me out a failure and a tightwad. You are my wife, and my wife doesn't accept charity! Go, if you want to, but if you do go"—his face twitched suddenly—"you need not come back."

"Roger!" Incredulity banished the resentment from her pale face. "You don't mean that!"

"I do mean just that. If you go, you need not come back."

They stared at each other in silence across the abyss their mutual hurt and contumacy had created.

Her voice was scarcely a whisper: "I shall go, Roger."

"That's settled, then," shortly. "I will have Jose drive you to Maricopa for the overland to-morrow evening." His quiet acquiescence added fuel to her wrath.

"How kind of you! I had expected to walk! It's only fifteen miles."

Temple smiled grimly. "Oh, Jose has to go to town to-morrow, anyway. I'm expecting the new plow on the western freight."

The reference was unlucky. Mrs. Temple's blue eyes were a blaze of anger.

"You care more about that plow than you do for me! You broke your promise to me rather than go without it. I'll tell Jose to put it in here instead of in the toolshed, so you can live with it! I wish you had to sleep with the darn thing!"

Next morning, when Temple came in from the barn, he found breakfast waiting for him, as usual. A trunk was standing open on the floor and feminine garments lay in orderly piles on the chairs and table. He made no comment and ate grimly and in silence and rose to go. At the door he turned. Mrs. Temple was carefully wrapping her summer hat in tissue paper and did not look up.

"Jose will be ready about noon," he told her. "I've got to work the horses all morning, so have Jose put them up and feed them before he starts home." He hesitated, then drawing his purse from his pocket he extracted its sole content—one ten-dollar bill—and laid it on the table.

"I'm sorry it's not more." He waited a moment for a reply, then went out.

There were bright red spots on Mrs. Temple's cheeks as she cleared away the breakfast things and put the room in order. Her head was held defiantly high. She even hummed a little tune as she finished packing the trunk and put up a lunch for her journey.

Picking up the ten dollars her husband had left, she pinned it in a conspicuous place on the shade of the reading-lamp. Then she set about preparing the early dinner.

Jose appeared promptly at noon. "The Señor, he say we eat, then go to town." Jose was cheerful; he enjoyed eating and going to town.

Mrs. Temple gave him his meal in the kitchen. Then, while he was harnessing the horses and strapping her trunk on the back of the open spring wagon, she arranged Temple's dinner on the table. Then she put on her dust coat, tied a protecting veil carefully about her hat, and mounted to a seat beside Jose.

Without a glance to right or left, with head held high, Mrs. Temple rode down the lane, past the field where her husband was at work, and was hidden in a cloud of dust that trailed her progress along the shimmering desert road.

It was shortly after four o'clock when Jose reined the tired horses in front of the squat, sunbaked station. Mrs. Temple descended and shook the thick, powdery dust from her dress and hat. Something in the gesture suggested that she was shaking from her skirts forever the contamination of an alien country.

"Put the horses up, Jose," she commanded, "and feed them in about an hour. They need to rest before you start back."

"Si, Señora, I wait." Jose enjoyed waiting. "I go see the plow, if she come."

Mrs. Temple's head went up and she turned away quickly. Her train was not due for an hour. She found a seat in the shade and sat down. She was quite alone, except for a woman on a seat across the platform, who was regarding her with friendly interest.

She was a worn, stooped little woman, in a shabby cotton dress. Her kindly, sunburned face was deeply lined, and straggling wisps of grayish hair hung about her neck, but from out the strained eyes looked a sympathy and a faith that had not faltered.

She addressed Mrs. Temple with the simple directness of a child.

"Will you be takin' the cars for the East, ma'am?"

The wistful note in her voice invited Mrs. Temple's sympathy.

"Yes," she told her. "I am going home for Christmas."

"Now, ain't that nice," beaming cordially as she sat down on the bench beside Mrs. Temple. "I reckon your ma will be right glad to see you. Where is your home, ma'am?"

"St. Louis."

"Now I call this right nice"—the little woman was pleasantly excited. "I hain't see anyone from Missouri—not in years. I am from Missouri, ma'am, from the Ozarks. It seems right neighborly to see you. Jim and me used to talk a lot of going home. I used to humor him that way."

"Jim?" interrogated Mrs. Temple, politely.

"My husband, ma'am. We buried him yesterday."

"Oh," in a softened voice. "I am sorry."

The wistful voice went on. "There's ain't nothin' to keep me here now, and I aim to go back to my folks soon as I kin earn the money. I've got four dollars—that's all there was left after I paid for the cloth to cover Jim's coffin with—a real pretty piece of all-wool, it was. I thought I could find work in Phoenix; I am a right handy cook. I ain't very strong, but I kin do a right smart of work if I kin set down and rest between times. As long as I get the work done they won't mind my settin', do you think?"

"I am sure they won't," Mrs. Temple told her, with pity in her heart. "Was your husband ill long?"

"A right smart time. We come out five years ago, come March. Jim's folks and mine put together and raised money enough to buy our tickets out here. We

didn't have much left when we got here, but Jim could work a little then and I got a nice place to work in a eating-house, and we got along. I saved a bit, too. I didn't let on to Jim, but I worked nights at the packing sheds in the fruit season, and I had most eighty dollars by the time Jim took to havin' hemorrhages and couldn't work no more. Jim never was strong; some folks thought Jim could've worked more, but I know he couldn't. I was always glad I kept well; Jim never wanted for nothin'—that is, to really hanker for it."

It was very still as the two women sat watching the early shadows gather. Presently the little faded woman began speaking.

"Jim always had warm blankets for the cold nights and sugar for his lemonade. Some thought I might've sweetened it with molasses, like I did my coffee, but Jim didn't like it that-o-way, and he always had sugar, even after they wouldn't sell but two bits' worth, along 'count of the war. I reckon I came near lying sometimes to get it, but it seems like if I used molasses for my sweetin', Jim could've had my share of sugar. Don't you think he could?"

Mrs. Temple nodded without speaking.

"No, I don't reckon Jim really lacked for nothin'. There was a nice spring about two miles from our shack; Miss Johnson give me a canteen to carry the water in, and it kept real cool; so Jim never had to drink no ditch water. The folks who let us stay on their land—Johnson, the name is—they had a cow and Mr. Johnson give me a quart night and morning jest for milking and tending the cow, so Jim always had plenty of milk.

"He was real patient-like, most of the time. Jim never was over-patient when he was well. He used to find fault with me right smart at first. I reckon me being so sort of spry made him nervous. But after he got real poorly he let me do everything for him and didn't complain much. It was a real pleasure to me to do for him. Miss Johnson used to tell me I was a fool to keep Jim in smokin' tobacco. She said it cost too much and wasn't good for him, noway. Maybe she was right, but Jim wanted it. Seems like he had smoked so long he just couldn't get along without his pipe. And he used to get real cross-like, too, without it; I dunno, either, as you could call it cross—just sort of short with me in his talk. I am always goin' to be glad Jim had all the tobacco he wanted."

Margaret Temple sat silently watching the thin line of smoke that stretched its level length from out the western sky.

"Jim got sort of used to bein' sick. Mostly he used to think he'd get well. Yes, ma'am, right up to the day he died he thought he was goin' to get well. He'd been real spry for some days, settin' in the sun and smokin'. And the day he died, ma'am, he was layin' there, quiet and comfortable. I brought him his milk and he took it—his hands got so thin at the last—and he said, 'Old Woman'—he always called me Old Woman, even when we was first married—'Old Woman,' he says, 'I'm goin' to get better,' and lay back easy and peaceful-like and smiled up at me and died, just that calm and restful. I used to be afeared he would choke up and not be able to get his breath, but he died just as I tell you, peaceful-like and with a smile at me."

Margaret Temple still sat watching the level line of smoke that now was very close. The station agent had appeared, apparently from nowhere, and was moving importantly about the platform.

The wistful voice continued. "I am always goin' to be thankful Jim died easy like that. I'm always goin' to remember how he smiled up at me and said, 'Old Woman, I'm going to get better,' and then just lay down and didn't breathe again. He *did* get better, ma'am; Jim never did no wrong to anybody. I ain't afeared but what I'll see him again."

Unexpectedly close the whistle of the overland pierced the desert stillness. The little, faded woman arose.

"That'll be your train, ma'am, and I'll be sayin' good-by. It's been a real pleasure to visit with you. I've been right lonely; it does a body good to visit."

Ten minutes later, as the heavy, transcontinental train pulled out on the second lap of her journey, a woman's face, marvellously transfigured, was pressed against a car window, peering through her unheeded tears into the dimming, eastern sky.

ROGER TEMPLE had passed the day in unpleasant company—his own—and the evening promised to be still less enjoyable. In Jose's absence he did the chores at the barn, then, too weary and disheartened to change his rough clothing, he threw himself into his favorite chair and proceeded to sit in judgment on his unworthy self.

He had acted like a fool. He had failed to keep his promise to his wife; had failed to appreciate the extent of her disappointment. It came to him that not once in those four long years had she complained of hardships, or lost heart.

He knew now that it was her courage that had kept him from giving up the struggle, and he had repaid her by sending her away! He tried to reconstruct the future, but his thoughts wandered. He was too tired, too dazed by the suddenness of the blow, to think clearly.

He would sit up till Jose came, then he would go to bed and on the morrow decide what to do. He glanced toward their silent bedroom; the whole world seemed as empty and hollow as did that quiet room.

Presently he was aroused by Jose's gutteral voice raised in command to his weary team. Jose had stopped in front of the house. Suddenly Temple recalled Mrs. Temple's saying that she would have Jose put the new plow in the house, for him to live with! Nerves suddenly tense, he stood waiting. The door opened slowly; then a white, tear-stained face was pressed against his and a broken voice said:

"I didn't use the ticket, Roger. I've come back! I met a poor old woman, and she only had four dollars. I gave her the ticket—and her husband died—and will you forgive me, Roger?"

"Forgive you!" Roger Temple held his wife with a clasp that hurt. "Forgive you! It's I who should be forgiven! I broke my promise to you, I—"

"No, no! I broke my promise, Roger—the promise I made you, for better or worse; there hasn't been any worse, Roger—"

Roger Temple bent his head to hide the emotion that gripped him, as he held her close.

"Oh, Roger, that poor waman! She had to go home alone! I don't want to go home till you can go with me! And, oh, Roger, she had to use molasses to sweeten her coffee with!"

YOU'RE IN OR YOU'RE OUT

By HERMAN HOWARD MATTESON

THE great rollers, marching in from the wide Pacific as the undertow caught them, flung themselves forward in a tantrum of spume and spray. It is ticklish business, navigating a dory among those jagged rocks off the far west coast of Canadian Vancouver Island. It requires a real boatman for the job, which is exactly why Mart Gilchrist was there. Giving his dory a thrust forward, Mart arose to a standing posture. In the same predicament, a landlubber would have ridden a thwart on his nose, or capsized; Mart stood as steadily in the pitching craft as if he had been on shore.

Again he gave the sweeps a shove. As the nose of the dory bore in between two jutting rocks, a hollow, terrifying billow sounded from the top of the great boulder ahead. A bull seal came snorting to the edge of the rock, grinding his yellow tusks, slapping angrily with his flippers. With ungraceful speed, half a hundred cow seals, their shrill plaints added to the bull's roaring, scuttered to the edge of the boulder, dove off into the breaking surf.

From his pocket, Mart extracted an oil-cloth covered book, made a mark with the pencil attached to the book by a string, returned it to his pocket, backed his craft out from the boulder. The bull seal lifted his gray-whiskered snout and trumpeted loudly. In answer to the lord's command, the numerous harem of wives swimming about, returned, flapping their way up onto the stones.

For many miles along the bleak, west shore, Mart visited group after group of rocks. On two occasions the lordly heads of establishments did not stop at bristling and snorting. One enormous old fellow put out and laid hold of the dory prow with his teeth. Mart shoved him off with an oar and backed out. A second, who from the size of his harem, which numbered a full hundred, must have been hitherto undisputed heavyweight champion of the coast, started to climb in over the gunwale after Mart. The dory nearly capsized. In the nick of time, Mart gave him the edge of the oar on the back of the head killing him.

Too bad to kill a bull, but he had to. Now there would be fun. The numerous harem of the dead champion would be divided up among neighboring lords, the choice going to those longest of tusk, and strongest and quickest of flipper.

Mart covered the entire end of the island, and the number of bulls, representing the number of harems, which averaged sixty each, was entered in his oil-cloth covered book. Then he headed in shore, skirted a narrow spit and came alongside an anchored launch. With the dory in tow, Mart started eastward. The third day following, the launch put into Victoria harbor and Mart went ashore and made for the division office of the joint Seal Commission of the United States and Canada, for which he had been working two years as a checker.

The seal herds, which center about Pribilof Island in Bering Sea, annihilated almost, a few years ago, are now protected. For fifteen years yet, no one may legally kill a fur-bearing seal. Seal

skins, therefore, are worth money, much money. A poacher who can grab a couple of hundred skins, and get away with them, has made wages for a year, big wages.

It is the habit of the fur seal to set forth from Pribilof, swim south to the rocks of Vancouver, and there haul out for the breeding season. Then the seals swim south and turn back to various shores and islands, where the young are born. As soon as the pups are large enough to navigate, the herds make north to Pribilof again.

As a double check, in order to determine the number of the herds, the seals are enumerated yearly, both at Pribilof and on Vancouver rocks. Mart's job was to count the harems off Vancouver. If any grave discrepancy showed between his count, and the count made later at Pribilof, determined by adding the average number of young to each harem, the commission got busy. Most important of the two enumerations, however, was the Vancouver count, for in the yearly hegira to the south, many bulls were slain battling with one another for domestic supremacy.

That poaching, somewhere along the line, had been going on on a rather ambitious scale, Mart was fully aware. For one thing, a Russian whaler had approached him boldly and offered him a thousand dollars if he would falsify his count by twenty harems.

Mart finally refused.

The following trip into Victoria, the division inspector in charge had been very exacting with Mart.

"There's poaching going on," said the inspector. "We have reports of new skins appearing in the London fur markets. Where do they come from? Where do they come from?" repeated the inspector, looking very sharply at Mart. "Somebody is due to lose a job, and when they do, they are very apt to win a billet for the federal penitentiary besides."

Mart's face flushed, and he began to stammer. When the time came to talk, Mart usually made a poor showing at it, especially in an office where he always felt ill at ease, and at a disadvantage. He was an out of door man, born and bred to the water, his father and his father's father fishermen.

"These are new skins," reminded the inspector. "Where do they come from?"

Mart's blue eyes began to narrow. He recalled the numerous times that he had been brought from Vancouver rocks, sent on fool's errands to remote places where, it was claimed, seals were hauling out. He had never found such seals, and always, he learned, some one had been put to checking temporarily on his beat.

"Anyone that says I'm cheating, is a liar," said Mart hotly.

"Easy there, Gilchrist," said the inspector. "Don't convict yourself. No one accuses you. Don't be the first to accuse yourself."

The inspector entered his private office, while Mart, the sweat standing upon his upper lip, his chest heaving, seated himself at a desk to make out his report. Sprawling over the desk like a school boy, he chewed a lead pencil to a pulp, sharpened a second, and finally managed to cover a sheet of paper with figures and notations.

Then he called one of the stenographers, a thin-lipped girl, who jounced down into a chair, staring with ill concealed disdain at Mart's hairy hands and the wristbands of his gray flannel shirt. She took the notes, transcribed them with two carbon copies, and, after a time, laid three sheets of typing on the desk, the sheets superimposed one upon the other, with the upper sheets shoved up a distance for his signature. He glanced over the upper sheet and made some comparisons with his note book. Seizing the pen in his thick fingers as if it had been a harpoon or a boat hook, he stabbed the point into the paper, and sputtered out three scrawled signatures.

With a sigh of relief that the task was done, he straightened up in his chair and looked around. He had felt uncomfortable, as if someone had been staring at him hard.

Someone had—Genie Morrow, one of the stenographers.

Mart blushed, lowered his gaze, looked again. Genie was still staring at him fixedly.

Once upon a time he and Genie had been friends, very, very good friends. In fact they had been born and raised on the same island. Three years before, Genie had left the island for the mainland to attend business college. Mart never saw her again until the day that he had walked into the commission office to take his oath as a checker, and there found Genie, at a desk, working. She was dressed richly, Mart thought, city fashion. He had shaken hands with her as if she had been a longshoreman, had stepped upon one of her feet, and had retreated in confusion to the dock outside the office door.

Thereafter, naturally, he saw Genie frequently. But they had grown apart. She went dressed like a millionaire's daughter, Mart thought, and had taken to going to plays and dances with the town boys, places that Mart's meagre salary would scarcely enable him to take her. No, she was leaving him far astern. He, a regular scow, couldn't possibly hope to convoy a girl that was clipper built and rigged like Genie.

The truth of the matter was that Mart was jealous, and he was too unsophisticated to dissemble. When Genie reproached him for neglecting her, he told her bluntly that they could be friends no longer, since she found so much pleasure in the company of folks that had no more beam to their bow than these city dudes.

So it was all off with Mart and Genie; between him and the girl whom he had taught to swim, with whom he had fished and clammed, it was all over. Why, once upon a time, he and Genie had selected a cabin site on Patos. But that was long, long ago, when she had been an island girl, and he an island boy.

Now, as if forgetful of the chasm that lay between them, Genie was staring very hard at Mart. She would look fixedly a moment, then lower her gaze to the papers upon the desk before him. She was trying to signal something to him. What? He was confused, shook his head stupidly.

The door of the inspector's office opened, the thin-lipped girl swept by Mart's desk, gathered up the three signed sheets, bore them back into the inspector's office, closed the door.

Genie arose from her desk and made for a filing cabinet. As she passed Mart, she whispered, "The report, did you read it?"

Another stenographer, catching the sound of the whisper but not the words, looked at Mart and giggled. Mart's ears flamed.

Genie was returning from the file cabinet. Mart nodded his head. Yes, he had read the report, of course.

As Genie took her seat, the door of the inspector's office opened, and the thin-lipped girl beckoned Mart to enter. The inspector wanted Mart to go at once to Texada Island where, it had been reported, two harems of fur seals had hauled out.

Away Mart went in the commission launch. There were no fur seals on Texada, never had been.

The third day following, he landed in Victoria. It was late afternoon, and the office of the commission had closed.

As Mart turned back and retraced his steps down the wharf, a half-breed Russian sailor named Novistok, mate on a whaler, emerged from the wharf shed, and beckoned to Mart. The Russian, hemming and hawing, obviously found it difficult to say what he had intended to say.

"Belay this slackin' aback," said Mart. "What's your reckonin?"

"You know what seal skins are worth?" demanded the Russian. "Well, you're in, or you're out. Come here. I want talk with you."

The whaler's pig eyes were gleaming as he led Mart into the shelter of the wharf shed.

Presently Mart with slow and thoughtful step emerged from the shed and walked on to his boarding place, repeating, half aloud as he walked, "You're in, or you're out."

The following morning, as he entered the commission office, he walked by Genie's desk, paused confusedly, and asked her if she would go to a show with him that night.

She was sorry, but she had made another engagement.

Mart's barometer ears flung out their red distress signal, and he went on to his own desk, where he proceeded to sweat out the report of his Texada trip, which was to the effect that he had nothing to report.

The door of the inspector's office opened. Standing on the threshold was a large man, with iron gray hair, and wearing funny, big spectacles on his nose. The inspector walked up behind the big man and pointed to Mart. The big man beckoned authoritatively for Mart to come. He closed the door, waved Mart to a chair.

"I am a member of the commission," he said somewhat pompously. "I arrived last night. No one in this office knew of my coming. The inspector was good enough, late as it was, to bring me here last night and open the files for my inspection. What do I find? These."

He held up an unfolded file sheet, and an envelope addressed to the commission head office in Washington. "These, one a report of your check, placed in the file, the other, also a report signed by you and made ready for mailing. The reports to not agree. Coarse work, my boy. The evidence is final, conclusive. As a federal officer, I declare you under arrest for falsifying your report on the number of seal herds hauled out on Vancouver rocks."

"Me? I— Why, you look here!"

"Tell it to the commission," returned the gray-haired man crisply. "The commission meets in Vancouver five days hence. Tell your story then."

The commissioner turned to the inspector. "I will take the afternoon boat for Vancouver, inspector. Our stammering friend here will accompany me. You collect all reports, stenographer's notes, everything bearing upon the case, and come on as soon as you can, but surely not later than Saturday morning. We would meet sooner, but Mr. Coleman, a member of the commission, cannot arrive from the North before that date."

Accompanied by the gray-haired commissioner, who spoke all told something less than half a dozen words, Mart went aboard the Princess Charlotte, which, at five in the afternoon, pulled out for Vancouver.

The afternoon following, at four o'clock, the inspector bundled up a roll of papers and summoned a taxi. Stopping a moment at his boarding place, he thrust the papers and some other articles into a grip, and the taxi took him on to the wharf. The Princess Maud, which alternates on the Vancouver run with the Princess Charlotte, lay alongside. The inspector bought his ticket, stepped into a telephone booth where he remained for some time, and emerged just as the steamer's whistle gave its warning toot.

He walked up the gangplank and entered the saloon. The deck hands, in response to the bo'sun's pipe, were just starting to haul in the plank when a girl, who had been standing beneath the shelter of the wharf shed, decided suddenly that she would go, too. She ran forward, leaped onto the end of the teetering plank, and skipped to the deck.

"Blime me!" exclaimed the cockney bo'sun, turning and looking after the girl who was climbing the companionway to

the hurricane deck. "She might 'a' 'ad a fall into the bloomin' salt chuck. She's a towerist, sure. See, to the 'urricane deck she goes, so she won't miss no scenery."

The tourist girl, who was dressed neatly, and who was carrying a small bag, walked along the hurricane deck, and seated herself on a folding-chair in the shelter of one of the life-boats. In a few moments, as the ship put about, crossed the light of Plumper Pass, stepping off her twenty knots, a terrific gale began to blow along the unprotected hurricane deck.

But still the tourist girl sat huddled by the life-boat. An hour or more she remained there, the deck all to herself, and it was with reason that she had it to herself, for in the chopping seas of Haro Strait, constant showers of driving spray swept the ship from bow to stern.

After a time, the cabin boy began to make the rounds of the lower decks, banging the dinner gong. Up the ventilating funnels came the voices of waiters bellowing orders into the galley. Then the tourish girl arose, made her way below, and went forward to the purser's office.

"I hadn't time to get a ticket," she said, "so I'll pay now. The name? Oh, Mary Gerrish. No, I—I think I do not care for dinner. May I see the passenger list?"

She ran her eyes over the list, handed it back, and walked out onto the forward middle deck where a long row of skylights opened above the dining tables in the saloon below. Walking along the partly opened lights, she studied the heads of the diners below. One especially she scrutinized sharply, then turned abruptly and hurried aft, walking along the ship's port side.

Before a stateroom she stopped, looked up and down the deck, laid her hand to the knob. The door was locked. A room or two distant, some careless passenger had left a key hanging in the lock. She extracted this key and tried it, but it did not fit.

This wouldn't do. Passengers were beginning to appear upon the deck, picking their teeth.

She thrust the key back in its proper lock and hastened back to her place in the shelter of the life-boat.

A long time, as if oblivious of the driving wind and spray, she remained seated, her head in her hands, thinking.

It was now pitch dark, and the light on Turn Point of Prevost Island lay well astern. The ship was rolling, so she braced herself by the gunwales of the line of life craft, and walked forward. Fair ahead lay the blinking light of Patos Island.

"Patos Island," she said half aloud, tracing in the air with a forefinger. "At Patos the boats swing far to starboard to avoid Boiling Reef, and Rosenfelt Reef. That brings them within a hundred fathoms of the shore by Patos Light; a hundred fathoms, two hundred yards, six hundred feet."

She turned, marched deliberately the length of the deck, leaned over the rail, and appeared to be studying the round life-ring suspended for use in emergencies to the rail of the middle deck.

Slowing, leaning her body to the gale, she regained her station by the life-boat, still marking something in the air, and repeating softly. "A hundred fathoms, six hundred feet."

Finally, she whacked her small hands together emphatically. "I'll do it. I will, I will."

When, as nearly as she could estimate, the Patos light was still about a mile distant, she picked up her bag and walked aft.

Always, on ships of more than one deck, a ladder is kept fastened to the outside of the rails for the use of crew only. Immediately below this ladder is the churn of the propeller. To prevent venturesome tourists from going below or aloft by the dangerous outside ladder,

it was kept roped off. Miss Gerrish, looking to see that there was no one on the deck, climbed over the rope, swung her body out over the churn of the wheel and descended to the middle deck.

Here she turned her attention to the life-ring, which was fastened to the rail by a stout line tied in a running bowline knot. From the circumference of the ring, a second cord ran to a nine-inch cylinder of red tin, the removable top of which was permanently fastened to the rail by a screw eye.

She stepped to the port side, then to the starboard and looked along the sweep of deck. Deserted; the wind and spray had driven everybody but herself within doors except a group of men clustered in the niche about the funnels.

The ship was bearing down swiftly on Patos light. Quickly she released the life-ring, and yanked out the removable top from the tin-can apparatus. Leaning, she swung the ring to clear the wheel, and dropped it into the sea.

There was a hiss, a flare of yellow flame that flung its light into the dark spaces about, and over the ship. She had dropped a life-ring, equipped with a Coston signal lamp, filled with potassium and sodium that ignite on contact with water, an invention that, in hours of peril at sea, has saved many a life.

As the yellow light burst along the deck, one of the smokers by the funnel, aware of the ordinary significance of it, shouted, "Man overboard! Man overboard!"

On the bridge, the officer repeated the cry, and the quartermaster at the wheel jammed down the indicator for full speed astern. Short, sharp toots of the whistle called the crew to the stations. The falls let go, and the work boat went over the side. The staterooms emptied themselves; the card players tumbled up from the recreation saloon, and every port hole below decks framed a craning neck and head.

Man overboard!

The ship, as the tug of her powerful engines began to tell, started to shake and roll. The work boat got away, and started with a rush in the direction of the Coston sputtering astern. Now, answering her helm, the craft had turned until she was headed in the direction whence she had come. Shouting encouragement to whatever luckless wretch it was that had gone overboard, all the passengers rushed to the bow, all, except the tourist girl, who had climbed swiftly to the hurricane deck again the moment the Coston had broken into a flame.

Now, hearing the hubbub forward, the cries and shouts of the passengers, she descended the ladder, ran along the port side, turned the handle of a stateroom door and entered. An instant later, she reappeared, ran aft, climbed the ladder, and crouched into the shadow of the life-boat, where she swiftly transferred a bundle from beneath her coat to the small, leather bag.

The work boat was returning. Now it was alongside, made fast to the falls, hoisted to its place on the forward, middle deck.

"False alarm," said the officer in charge. "If it was anybody, they went down like a rock. I have an idea the shake of the ship worked the ring loose, and it fell, yanking free the Coston cap, and igniting."

The ship was again coming about. In a minute it would be on its proper course, and shooting ahead at top speed to make up time.

As the bow swung, and Patos light came again into line, the tourist girl removed her coat, folded it into a bundle, which she attached to the handle rings of the leather bag with one of her shoe laces which she swiftly removed. Then she removed the lace from the other shoe, stood in her stocking feet, stepped out of her skirt, and fastened this garment, both shoes, the coat and the bag to the second lace, which she passed around her shoulder in a loop.

Patos Light began to slide to the starboard bow of the ship. Now she could see plainly the rugged rocks piled about the base of the lighthouse. In another few turns of the wheel they would be fairly abreast the light.

She ran across the deck, crouched and crawled between two life-boats, and stood on the rim of the unguarded deck, one hand steadied by a davit guy. The ship was exactly opposite the light. Now!

She let go her grip upon the guy line, leaned forward, and fell with a soft splash into the black water.

For a moment she floated low. As the stern lights of the ship receded, and there was no cry from deck to indicate that now someone was really overboard, she struck for shore, swimming an easy practiced stroke, and with the bag and the shoes, the coat and the skirt bobbing along very satisfactorily in tow.

Her feet struck gravel. She waded ashore, resumed the wet skirt and coat, emptied the water from her shoes, slipped her feet into them and started on a dog trot down the beach, swinging the little leather bag in her hand. Now and then she was forced to stop and retrieve a shoe, but after a few moments she came to a neat, little cabin, went clattering up the steps, opened the door and walked in.

"What— For the good land's sake, Genie, where you been?"

"Swimming, Ma. And I'm hungry as two bears. Got any pie?"

SEVERAL grave gentlemen were gathered about a table in a private parlor of the Hotel Vancouver. At one side was seated a very angry, red-eared young man. The chairman of the commission arose.

"Gentlemen, there has been an awkward delay. Thus far, the inspector has been unable to recover the papers taken from his stateroom the other night. He is still continuing the search.

"In the event"—here he looked hard at the red-eared young man—"in the event— Ah, here is the inspector."

Leaving the door open behind him in his fluster, the inspector hurried in excitedly. "Nothing! I've had the boat searched — offered a reward — results, none. But what matters it?" he continued angrily. "You saw the reports, Mr. Chairman; those and the fact that they have been stolen—what added proof do you require? Those papers—"

"Those papers," repeated a sweet voice from the door, "why, here they are."

The lower jaw of the inspector jarred open as Genie Morrow walked to the table and laid down a bundle of papers.

"Here they are, all of them, including one or two, perhaps, that some certain person wishes *had* been stolen. Mr. Commissioner, there's been crooked work in the office for a long time. Lucy Haskins made out that false report—you may guess at whose request—and placed it between the sheets of the true report. Mart signed them all. Here they are, the signed reports that you want so badly. I stole them out of the inspector's stateroom. I meant to fling them into the bay; that's a fact. Then I got to thinking—I am so glad I did—and decided to take them home and examine them closely. Oh, I am so glad. Had I thrown them overboard, I would never have known of the existence of these two separate sheets of memoranda that I found loose in the inspector's grip."

She turned directly and faced the commissioner chairman. "How many sealskins were reported to have appeared in the London market?"

"Seventeen hundred and twenty-eight."

"Good. This memorandum covers the delivery of seventeen hundred and twenty-eight skins to the whale ship Romanoff; the other memorandum, the payment of certain moneys to Lucy Haskins, and to one Novistok. Look, Mr. Chairman. Whose handwriting is that? Exactly. It is the handwriting of the inspector, Mart's accuser."

WHEENY SHIFTS THE CLIMAX

By LOUIS SCHNEIDER

JUDGING by all the signs, Rope Kerrow held a good hand. His chair was tilted forward until all its weight rested on its front legs. The toes of his square shoes rested on the floor at each side. His short forearms extended along the edge of the table, and he held his cards close to his sweater as he squinted across through the blue haze of tobacco smoke.

Wheeny, who had been watching the scarcely noticeable movement of a mellow, yellow mess which stewed in a pan on the far corner of the stove, let his curiosity get the better of him. After working his owlish eyebrows several times in an undecided manner and twitching one corner of his loose mouth spasmodically, he slipped behind Rope's chair in furtive silence and tried to get a glimpse of the cards held by the other. Once or twice he moved as if ill at ease and about to back away, and his foolish face registered a vague apprehension; but—that hand must be worth looking at.

The square-ended stick of Rope's forefinger held down a greasy two-dollar bill which he had just kicked into the pot. The bared teeth of his stubbly, projected lower jaw gripped a much worried black stogie which set at an angle that added a perky defiance to his grin of humorous speculation.

"That," said Rope, jiggling the bill a bit, "says y' ain't got enough in y'r mitt, squeeze it as hard as y' want to, as 'd call me in anything clost t' a whisper, even."

His opponent studied him a bit.

"'F y' had a big fist full," he ruminated, "y'd act shaky, an' coax me into puttin' in more kale. Y' ain't got nothin'."

"Try me, Cluck; try me."

"Got a notion to."

Cluck shoved a hand in his pocket—but it stayed there. He studied his hand a while, and then looked at Rope.

"Lemme see. I stood pat—y' drawed one—hmmm—"

"C'mon!" jeered Rope. "C'mon!"

"Stay with him, Cluck," advised the player at the left end of the table. "Out with y'r kale, an' call him."

"Aw—let him have it," interjected the player at the other end of the table. "I want t' get in on another deal. My luck was rotten this time—an' mebbe not as rotten as yours, f'r all y'r stickin'."

Cluck's nerve broke. He spat out an oath and slammed his cards on the table, face down.

Rope's forefinger crumpled the bills into his palm as he rocked back and with a thump brought his chair to a balance on its hind legs. He grinned in triumphant mockery, and still held his cards close to his sweater.

Wheeny squealed like a trapped rat. His movement to retreat had been too slow and, when Rope swung back, the right leg of the chair struck Wheeny's left foot squarely back of the toes and pinned it to the floor. He twisted this way and that to free himself, but the chair held. With fear of Rope in his eyes he brought his sound of pain to a hiss of indrawn breath while he squirmed.

Rope winked at the other three, and then burst into a laugh.

"Some bluff. Looka here."

Without shifting more than a few ounces of his weight, he flipped his cards face up on the table. The others craned their necks.

"It's on you, Cluck," chuckled one. "Pair o' jacks—deuce, tray, four—all mixed. Whoop! Whadja have, anyway?"

He tried to face the bluffed cards, but Cluck swept them into the deck.

"It's on me, a' right," he admitted. "Nev' mind how bad. Wheeny, run up t' th' Dutchman's an' get us a bucket o' suds."

"Not much," broke in Rope and, without turning, he began to rock backward and forward on Wheeny's foot. "That's such a good pot, it's on me. An' don't take a bucket, Wheeny; make it four quarts. Get a move on y'. Shuffle 'em, Bill."

He rocked complacently on his seat and laughed once more.

"Some little bluffer, ain't I, Cluck?"

"Oh, some, mebbe; I'll give y' that; but not such a much. Some day y'll fall down on some o' y'r bluffs."

"Yaaah!" gibed Rope, while Wheeny twisted and whined with the pain of the boring chair-leg; crouched and squeezed his calf and whimpered; rose and threatened voicelessly and spat like a cat. "Yaaah, listen t' Cluck! An' if y' was to ast me, I'd say he had a kick in that mitt o' his'n that 'd a knocked me stiff if he'd a even thought o' callin' me. Bah! It gives me a bad taste in my mouth. An' that reminds me—I ain't heard nothin' o' Wheeny flattin' it f'r th' suds yet."

He swung over and around, bringing the whole of his pivoted weight to bear on the chair-leg which rested on Wheeny's foot. Wheeny drew away as far as his leg would let him and his whimpering rose a degree. His sliver of a frame, close to the floor, seemed a mere wavering shadow of Rope's hulk.

"What t'ell!" jerked out Rope. "Didn't I tell y' t' get four big ones at the Dutchman's and get 'em quick? Well—register speed, see? Whatcha whimperin' about again, anyway, huh?"

He lurched forward and threatened with his open hand, and Wheeny was fairly forced into yapping like a coyote as he tried to get out of reach. He finally wiped a dew of sweat from his brow with his forearm, and fell to snarling. Rope dropped his eyes along the outstretched body and leg in great surprise. When they finally reached the imprisoned foot he stooped and peered in incomprehension.

"W'y—what th' —— Oh—I—beg—y'r—pardon—sure!" he expanded in apologetic astonishment, but still he did not offer to move his chair.

"Y'-y'-y'—'y-y'-y' knowed it all th' time, damn y'!" gasped Wheeny in agony.

"What!" barked Rope, springing up.

Wheeny fell back full length and scuttled away like a trap-freed animal. By the stove he cowered and nursed his foot.

"Hell," said Rope, swallowing his merriment, "I hope that didn't hurt y', but I ain't goin' t' stand y' cussin' me. Now streak it f'r th' hops. Four big ones, rec'lect—an' y' might take th' bucket along an' get a little f'r y'rself."

Wheeny sidled far around, got the bucket, and limped quickly for the door. A burst of laughter followed him down the darkness of the alley, and Rope's bull-like roar dominated it.

He stopped to shake a puny fist back. "Th-th-that—bunch! Th-th-that—Rope!" he exploded.

At the side door of the Dutchman's place he stopped. He looked back down the street, at the closed door before him, at the bucket in his hands, his brows working. Finally he relaxed his fingers slowly and the bucket clattered at his feet. He made an effort at squaring his shoulders as he walked away.

"I ain't goin' back," he told the night. "I'm done with th-that bunch, I am."

Yet he had not gone half way down the next block before he stopped short.

"Might 's well get my share o' th' suds, first," he mused. And he turned and went back and straight in at the Dutchman's, picking up the discarded bucket as he went.

"How much?" queried the bartender. "Gallon?"

"Yeah—no—well—"

"Hey, youse—out wid it! How much? Is it f'r Rope an' his bunch?"

"Ye-ah—gimme a—a quart."

"A quart! F'r Rope an' his bunch!"

Wheeny was in a panic. "A-a—q-quart—an' four big ones," he chattered.

"Dat's more like it," snapped the bartender, and set out the order. "An' git back, quick, 'fore Rope takes d' hide off o' youse."

Wheeny raced back into the alley as swiftly as his foot and his burden would allow. At the door he stopped to listen.

"It's funny," he heard Cluck saying, "how much soup y' c'n boil out o' a couple o' sticks o' dynamite, ain't it?"

"Looks like damn little, t' me," came the voice of Bill.

" 'Nough there t' crack a dozen boxes, ain't they, Rope?"

"Dozen! I sh'd say so. 'Twon't all be used f'r that, though, 'f that dago of a Gliotti don't come through like we wrote him. Hate to waste any of it on his dump but— Looks a little like stale beer, don't it? Say—"

He broke off abruptly, and footsteps came toward the door. Wheeny slid off the end of the step and crouched in the shadows.

Rope's form stood silhouetted as the door swung open. He whistled, but got no answer.

"Damn that runt!" he rapped out. "Ain't he never comin' back?" He slammed the door. "I'm goin' t' scare the devil out o' him some o' these days."

"S-s-ome o' these t-t-times," sibilated Wheeny to himself, "y-y-y'll go too f'r, an'—"

"Ain't y' 'fraid y'll go too f'r wit' him some o' these days?" echoed Cluck's voice, within, and Wheeny shrank down and shivered. "Y' can't tell what a half-wit o' that sort 'll do."

Rope laughed. "Y' can't go too f'r wit' a nut like him."

For a time there was quiet and Wheeny was about to open the door, when Rope laughed again—a bellowing guffaw.

"I got it! I'll scare him stiff. Listen. I said that soup looked somethin' like stale beer, didn't I, huh?"

"Sure."

"Well, listen. I'm goin' to blow Wheeny up wit' some of it."

"Huh!"

"Aw—wit' some o' th' stale beer, I mean. Listen. Put half a pint or so of it in a old beer bottle, pull th' load out o' a 22-caliber shot ca'tridge, stick th' ca'tridge on th' end o' a piece o' fuse, hang th' fuse in th' bottle, fasten 'er there, down Wheeny an' tie him, light th' fuse, set it aside him, an'—he'll t'ink it's soup! Say—when that empty ca'tridge goes off! Wow!"

Wheeny's knees chattered at that, as well as his teeth, innocent as the trick would prove, now that he knew of it. He scuttled to the shadows just in time to keep from being seen by Rope, who once more came to the door to whistle down the alley.

"Nowhere in hearin', or he'd answer," pronounced Rope. "Say, when that goes off!" he chortled, "I— Boys, let's see him run. Hold him till th' fuse 's lit, an' then let him slip. How's that?"

A chorus of laughter greeted the proposal. Wheeny backed away.

"Fix it up in th' mornin'—while he's gone—ready f'r him when he gets in in th' evenin'—" he heard Rope's voice fading as he went.

At the end of the alley a change came over him.

" 'S funny, ain't it, huh?" he crackled. "Funny! I'll show y'—some o' these

times. S-s-somehow. I can stand it 'f y' can."

With that he hurried down the alley, making as much noise as he could, pushed open the door, maneuvered for a clear way to set the four bottles on the table and retreated into a corner with his bucket.

" 'Bout time y' was comin'!" Rope bit at him. " 'Dja haf t' make it?"

Wheeny gave no answer.

For the rest of the evening he did nothing except keep out of their way and nurse his foot in sullen silence.

"Leave 'bout half a pint o' those suds in that bucket," Rope warned him once, with a wink for the benefit of the others. "We want it to-morrow to scare—to scour somethin' wit'."

All the next day Wheeny wandered about not far from one or the other, or all, of the trio. A little after sundown, having them all together, he slipped away.

Back in the dump he hunted with feverish haste through the untidy array of boxes and shelves along its walls. After a time he unearthed, from behind a dirty curtain, the thing for which he had been looking.

In the bottom of a small beer bottle was about half a pint of yellowish liquid. Down through the neck of the bottle, and held in place by a wedge of double paper, was about two feet of fuse, and on the inner end of this, within an inch or so of the liquor, was fixed a shining cylinder of metal.

Wheeny pulled out paper and fuse and examined the bit of metal. It had a slight rim at its closed end. He slipped it off with trembling fingers and put in its stead another bit of metal, of nearly like shape, but rimless, which he took from his pocket.

"Scare me, will y'? Th-that'll be enough t' scare you," he chattered. He shook the bottle with an easy motion, and smelled into it. "Suds, a' right."

Half way across the room, to a darker corner, he burst out with a hysterical laugh. The sound frightened him, and he almost dropped the bottle. With bated breath he listened. Nothing stirred, however, and he continued into the corner, where he busied himself with clinking glass for a time, muttering to himself.

He had scarcely crossed the room and replaced fuse and paper, when voices sounded outside. With a jerky effort he pushed the bottle into its recess and sprang across the room and down beside the stove. Under an old blanket which he jerked over himself, he lay and shivered.

Rope struck a match as he came in and lighted the lamp.

"Soon 's he comes in we'll— Now, what t'ell?" He walked over and used his shoe on the twitching figure under the blanket. "Sick? Cold?"

Wheeny said nothing. He was just then incapable.

"Somethin' wrong wit' y', huh? Scared, mebbe? T'ink mebbe I finally caught up wit' y', don't y'? Well, mebbe I have. Say, boys—Gliotti lamped me this afternoon like he was gettin' onto somethin'—like somebody might a been droppin' him a hint or two 'bout those Black Hand letters he's been gettin'. Yesterday mornin' I seen somebody talkin' to him that looked like—y' don't reckon it was—" He ended by searching out Wheeny's injured foot, and stepped on it heavily.

Wheeny jerked away and did his best to swallow a cry. The others came nearer, growling.

"It w-w-wasn't m-m-me y' s-s-seen." Wheeny's teeth were going like castanets. "Honest t' God, Rope, it wasn't."

Rope drew the group over to one side. Their talk gradually grew louder and their voires more positive as they went on.

" 'F y' was to ast me," declared Rope, "I'd say, let's not take no chances. I been suspectin' him, an' I been fixed for him for quite a while. Been lettin' him

hang 'round here wit' us an' have a good time, an'—now look what he's went an' done! Huh? No, sir! We'll send th' whole dump up wit' him. Bring th' bottle y'll find behind that curtain. Careful wit' it, Bill. Soup's mighty touchous."

With a single leap, he cleared the room and twitched the blanket away. He brought Wheeny's hands together at the back, whipped out a bandanna, and lashed the wrists together. Wheeny fought, in a way, but the resistance ran out of him at sight of the bottle which Bill brought to their side.

"Rope," he screeched, "you ain't honest goin' t' tie me an'—"

Rope clapped a hard hand over his mouth.

"No beefin'," he bit in; "we don't want any bulls 'round here—yet. Y' got it comin' t' y'. Here—gimme somethin' t' gag him wit'."

"O-o-h—my God—a'mighty!" drivelled Wheeny, between the heavy fingers; "don't! Th-that much soup'll t-t-tear h-h-half th' block down! Don't tie me! Help!"

"None o' that! There—y' won't yell through that."

Rope stepped over to where Bill held the bottle.

"I cut th' fuse two foot long. That'll give us a minute t' make our getaway in. That'll be a-plenty, huh? Everybody ready?"

Behind their turned backs, Wheeny pulled his untied feet under him and slipped the loose bandanna from his wrists.

"Light her up, an' let's get out," ordered Rope, a chuckle in his tone. "Now watch!"

When the first sputtering of the lighted fuse struck his ear, Wheeny drew himself together and on his feet. In a flash, he catapulted toward the door with a wild and desperate yell, his injured foot forgotten. The group made a dash for him, but he got away.

"Hell!" bawled Rope, "we forgot t' tie his feet! Get out, fellers!"

Wheeny tore down the alley as though Death were at his heels. As he shot out of the mouth of it and across the street into another, a mighty, roaring chorus of laughter came after him. A single backward glance showed him a dark, swaying group in the door of the dump, and in the center of it a sinister, moving spot of fire—the burning fuse. His shaking frame almost went to pieces at the sight, but he caught himself and put on an extra burst of speed.

He had almost reached the second street when a terrific explosion tore open the night. Wheeny pitched forward and lay quivering, as if the detonation had hurled him there.

"Sc-scared me, didja?" he mewled into the crook of his elbow. "Y-y-y' won't no more—s'help me! S-s-soup looks a whole lot like stale s-s-suds, but it d-d-don't act like it, does it, Rope? Scared me, d-d-didja!"

With tears of weak anger running down his foolish face, and mouthing stale, useless threats, he sat up slowly and nursed his injured foot.

C. de W., writing in the New York Herald, says, "It is not the brandy that keeps the fruit cake moist, but the fruit and butter." Man born of woman is no fruit cake.—*Louisville Courier-Journal.*

The chances are that the fellow who has never made any mistakes has never plugged any bullseyes.—*New York Evening Journal.*

THE MAN FROM INDIANA

By MERDEN LAW

THE drug store of Adolphus Halevy was of unusual appearance. No German silver and imitation marble soda fountain was in evidence; no miscellany of nameless toilet articles met the prescription seeker's gaze, nor did young and practiceless physicians loiter there. In a way it was a place of mystery, although much frequented by a certain circle of the city's masculine population.

Mr. Halevy himself was short, fat and bald, of a manner peculiarly stolid and apathetic, and had a soul—the soul of the fabled Pedro Garcia. It resided in his pocketbook. He also had another name. As a dispenser of unhappiness he was widely known as Shylock, and this unpopular appellation will be understood when it is stated that Mr. Halevy was, in fact, a loan shark and his unusual drug store a mask for the more profitable operations of low finance.

Business had been good for several days, and Mr. Halevy was as joyful as he well could be, considering his occupation when, one morning, a stranger presented himself and his card.

"Doubtless," said the stranger in a rather thin, high-pitched voice, "doubtless I speak with the proprietor of this—er—establishment?"

Mr. Halevy regarded him hopefully as a possible fly for entanglement in an already crowded web, and his eyes, long trained to absorb and retain the dress and features of prospective clients, instantly stored away upon the retina of his mind the portrait of a man tall and gaunt, red of face and watery of eye, a man who wore glasses, sported false teeth and was clothed in black. He looked at the card that had been thrust into his hand and frowned.

"Potts, attorney at law," he muttered.

"Correct, my dear sir, correct," said his visitor. "A. C. Potts, attorney at law."

"No use for a lawyer, Potts," growled the shylock impolitely. "Collect my own debts—by a special process. My business is legitimate"—which he believed—"and unless you—er—"

"Potts, sir, A. C. Potts, attorney at law," prompted the stranger.

"Er—Potts, unless you want a loan. Fill up these blanks," and he shoved out a handful of that finely printed literature to which his victims by affixing their names signed away their rhetorically inalienable rights to the pursuit of happiness for an unnamed period.

"My dear sir, my dear sir," remonstrated Mr. Potts, gesturing with a long, lean forefinger. "Special process, tee, hee! A little joke," he added slyly. "Special process, I can imagine! But Mr. Halevy, my dear sir, I am here on a matter of considerable moment. You read my card? A. C. Potts, sir, attorney at law, of Linkport, Indiana, fair city beside the Wabash. I seek, Mr. Halevy, I seek," and he thrust a hand into the breast of his shiny frock coat, "one Ambrose Welthammer, for whom I am intrusted with large sums of money."

"Don't know him," said Mr. Halevy emphatically, though a sparkle of interest appeared in his dull blue eyes at the mention of money, "don't know him."

"Possibly not, Mr. Halevy, possibly not, my dear sir, but in your business—"

"It's legitimate," interposed the shylock.

"True, I grant you, my dear sir. An institution, sir, for which, unlike some others, I have a high regard, a lofty regard, enabling as it does the poor man, whose name I regret to say is legion—drink and cards, Mr. Halevy, *and,* unhappily, women—to borrow on modest interest—um—that is, considering the risk, a sum sufficient to meet his immediate need. An institution, Mr. Halevy, an institution. But, my dear sir, my business is of extreme importance and, as an attorney at law intrusted with numberless momentous secrets, is private. Locked in my breast, Mr. Halevy, are sacred confidences which could not be torn from me by the rack, an instrument of torture, as doubtless you know.

"I am a man, my dear sir, of few words and those the choicest. Have you no private office far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife, where we might retire for a space of time? I may say, Mr. Halvey, that I am empowered by my client, the administrator, to pay well, well mark you, for any information received."

At the word pay, Mr. Halevy awoke from his apathy. "My time's val'able, Potts, but I can spare you a minute," and he called a scaly-faced youth from the book cage to take his place in front, and led the way to the dusty back room where he conducted all financial operations of a delicate nature. After assigning Mr. Potts to a rickety chair, he took one of the same for himself.

"Now, Potts," he wheezed, "my time's val'able."

Mr. Potts mopped his red face with a gaudy handkerchief. "But not more so than mine, I assure you, my dear sir. I have a large and growing practice in the thriving little city of Linkport, Indiana, the fairest flower, sir, that blows in these broad United—"

"My time's val'able, Potts."

"Certainly, sir, certainly, and I am a man of few words. As I was saying, some five years since I removed to the city of Linkport, Indiana, and almost immediately, thereafter, became attorney at law for Mr. Zachariah Welthammer, the richest man we have, *had,* I should say, for Mr. Welthammer is dead, of a lingering disease, I am sorry to say. He litigated considerable and my fees amounted, per annum, sir, to the sum perhaps—"

"My time's val'able, Potts," said Mr. Halevy.

"Yes, yes, my dear sir, certainly so, valuable. As I was about to say, Mr. Welthammer was rather close, indeed; called by some a miser. A vile slander, sir, vile—we should say no ill word of the dead—and while he left much property, I regret exceedingly to state, especially, sir, as his attorney at law, that he made no will, dying intestate—a law term, Mr. Halevy—no will, my dear sir, but a scapegrace son, his only known heir, who left home many years ago—a misunderstanding over the amount of food consumed per diem—deserted his aged father, Mr. Halevy, and is said, said, mind you, to be in your pleasant and sociable city. Indeed, my dear sir, it brings to memory the gemlike little city of Linkport, Indiana, beside the River Wab—"

"My time's val'able, Potts," remarked Mr. Halevy.

"Exactly, my dear sir, exactly, and mine. As I was saying, I seek Mr. Ambrose Welthammer. If in this city, where is he to be found you ask, and justly. Recall, Mr. Halevy, he is a spendthrift. Putting two and two together, I deduce a saloon, a gambling house, a loan establishment such as yours, Mr. ——"

"My business is legitimate," said Mr. Halevy.

"Doubtless, sir, doubtless. As I was saying, I come to you as a leading member of our ancient profession. I ask simply and in few words, do you know

the aforesaid Ambrose Welthammer?"

"I do not," replied Mr. Halevy, getting up.

The attorney at law put forth a detaining hand. "My dear sir, one moment. A matter of grave importance, for which I am prepared to reimburse you."

Mr. Halevy resumed his seat. "My time's val'able, Potts," he complained.

"My dear sir, valuable, certainly. As I was saying, the said Ambrose Welthammer may have, indeed it is highly probable that he has, assumed another name."

"What's he look like?" asked Mr. Halevy.

"Unfortunately, my dear sir, there is no photograph. His aged father was a simple man, sir, very, and cared nothing for the luxuries of life; but I have here a description furnished by the leading citizens of Linkport, Indiana, a city, sir—"

"My time's—"

"Yes, yes," continued the attorney at law hurriedly, and thrusting a hand inside his coat drew forth a sheet of paper. " 'Description of the said Ambrose Welthammer,' " he read. " 'Medium height, light hair, blue eyes, large ears and a nose of ultra-Roman contour.' "

Mr. Halevy ran over his mental photograph gallery without result. "Is that all?" he questioned.

"Well," said Potts diffidently, "I may say that he is known to have a strawberry birthmark on his left shoulder."

Mr. Halevy was moved to scorn. "Do you want me to bring all my customers back here and undress 'em?" he inquired.

"By no means, my dear sir, by no means, Mr. Halevy. But, for instance, a young man enters your—er—famous establishment, a young man, say, answering to this description—"

"Half the men in the world have that description," said Mr. Halevy impatiently. "My time's val'able, Potts."

"Certainly, my dear sir, certainly, valuable. As I was about to say, should you by chance, Mr. Halevy, chance, let us say, meet a young man answering to this description, communicate with A. C. Potts, attorney at law, Hotel Royal, this city, advising said party of the first part that I have with me for delivery, thinking perhaps he might be in want, the sum of five thousand dollars. I will pay you well, sir, for this information, provided, of course, it proves to be the long lost heir at law. A matter of importance, Mr. Halevy, extremely so.

"In the meantime I will search the saloons—infamous places, my dear sir, infamous. I may state I have made it a rule never to touch, taste or smell, except, of course," he added hastily, "except medicinally. I have a slight cold at present which I am treating with a preparation widely sold in the city of Linkport, Indiana, a prohibition town, sir, strictly."

Mr. Halevy furtively pressed a button set in the wall behind his chair, a device for ridding himself of lingering visitors, and forthwith the scaly-faced youth appeared.

"You're wanted out front, Mr. Halevy," he whispered hoarsely.

Mr. Halevy arose without apology. "My time's val'able, Potts," he said. "If I see this Welthammer I'll let you know. Good day," and let the lawyer out by way of a side door.

Mr. Halevy consumed quite a little of his valuable time during the next few days in cogitating upon the subject of one Ambrose Welthammer and his inheritance, especially the latter. Twice he had noticed upon the streets young men responding fairly well to the description given by Mr. Potts, and finally one morning (an example perhaps of the drawing power of thought) a youth giving his name as Charles Edgewood and bearing a strong resemblance to the portrait sketched by the attorney at law, entered the drug store to negotiate a loan. He had blue eyes, light hair, a Roman nose and large ears.

In taking his description for purposes of identification in case of future default, Mr. Halevy interpolated a question. "Any birthmarks?" he asked.

"Strawberry on left shoulder," replied the youth.

Mr. Halevy started. "Your name's Welthammer," he asserted severely.

"Guess again, uncle," remarked Mr. Edgewood flippantly.

Mr. Halevy pondered a moment over the intricacies of successful money getting. "How'd you like to be an heir at law?" he inquired at last.

"I'd be a grandma for money," said the client enthusiastically. "Show me."

"This way," directed Mr. Halevy.

Half an hour later they emerged, the young man smiling and Mr. Halevy rubbing his hands together softly. "Come around this afternoon about three," he murmured. "And remember, no talk."

"All under my hat, pal," said Mr. Edgewood, winking slyly, and passed out.

Mr. Halevy immediately called up the Hotel Royal and inquired for A. C. Potts, attorney at law. After a moment that gentleman replied.

"Hello, Potts," cried the shylock, "hello, Potts. This is Halevy. I've found the heir at law. Yes, yes; I'll bring him up at three o'clock. Yes. Now, Potts, now, my time's val'able," and slammed up the receiver. "Damn Linkport," he muttered.

About three o'clock that afternoon, therefore, Mr. Adolphus Halevy and his young partner in deceit were shown to Mr. Potts's room, and the attorney at law swept forward to meet them with a gush of welcoming words.

"Mr. Halevy, my dear sir, your hand," he cried breathlessly. "A pleasure, a pleasure, indeed, I assure—"

"Potts," interposed Mr. Halevy with dignity, "this is the heir at law; this is Ambrose Welthammer. Look him over, Potts. See that medium height and light hair, them blue eyes and big ears, that Roman nose, and—he's got the mark."

Mr. Potts drew himself up and subjected the young man to severe scrutiny.

"There is certainly a strong resemblance," he said. "You have all the earmarks—er—no offense, young sir. You have the general appearance, my young friend. But, gentlemen," he protested, "this is a matter of great moment. Be seated and let us proceed in an orderly and dignified manner."

Accordingly, Mr. Halevy and his youthful friend sat down. Mr. Potts coughed tentatively. "A slight cold, gentlemen," he explained. "My lungs are not strong. If you will excuse me, I have here a medicinal preparation much in vogue in Linkport, Indiana, a fair city, gentlemen, and prohibition, sirs, strictly. A most soothing effect upon the throat and delicate internal—"

"My time's val'able, Potts," said Mr. Halevy.

The attorney at law gulped down a mouthful from a slim, black bottle, which he immediately returned to an inside pocket. "Certainly, my dear sir, certainly. Valuable, indeed, and mine. Now," he continued judicially, turning to the youth, "your name, young sir."

"Ambrose Welthammer."

"You were born in Linkport, Indiana. A privilege, sir, to have first seen the light of this contentious world in that calm and carefree city beside the River Wabash—twelve churches and a broomcorn factory, young sir. Doubtless you have heard those beautiful words from the classic ballad, 'The moon shines bright to-night upon the Wab—'"

"My time's val'able, Potts," remarked Mr. Halevy wearily.

"My dear sir, my dear sir," remonstrated the attorney at law. "Valuable, certainly. But consider. A matter of grave importance, to be conducted in accordance with the rules of evidence, ossified wisdom of the ages. Order and propriety, Mr. Halevy, order and propriety. The law, though tender and considerate—um, to those who can pay, of

course—though tender and considerate, Mr. Halevy, is a jealous mistress. Justice, gentlemen, justice to all. Now, young sir, you were born in Linkport, Indiana?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your father's name was Zachariah Welthammer?"

"Yes, sir."

"A noble man, my young friend, noble, and extremely careful in money matters. He is dead, of a lingering disease. Now show the jury—er—show me the strawberry birthmark."

The youth removed his coat and collar, pulled down a corner of his shirt and disclosed the birthmark. Mr. Potts examined it carefully, then jumped up and clasped the claimant's hand warmly.

"Congratulations, Mr. Welthammer, congratulations, young sir, on your good fortune. It is a pleasure, my dear young friend, to deliver here and now a portion of your poor old father's wealth. Fearing you might be in need, I brought with me a goodly sum in currency," and pulling a black valise from beneath the bed he extracted a bundle of banknotes approximating in size, as reflected in Mr. Halevy's glistening eyes, a baker's loaf, and slapped down a receipt.

"Sign here, Mr. Welthammer," he said, indicating a dotted line.

The youth wrote the name of Ambrose Welthammer, and Mr. Potts placed the roll in his hands. "Five thousand dollars, young sir, fifty one-hundred-dollar bills, a sum sufficient to have boarded, lodged, clothed and amused your poor old father for a hundred years."

The young man looked at the money incredulously. "If it's good, it will last me about a hundred days," he remarked.

"Mr. Welthammer," exclaimed the attorney at law aghast, "a hundred days! Consider, my young friend—"

"If it's good," interrupted the putative heir. A thought struck him and he ran through the roll rapidly. "Gimme back that receipt, Potts," he cried. "This is some skin game. I'll bet this stuff is phony."

"Phony, young sir, phony!" returned Mr. Potts. "Nonsense, Mr. Welthammer, nonsense. I only wish I had a trainload like this roll of yours."

"Don't be a fool, er—Welthammer," said Mr. Halevy testily. "Take your money and let's go."

"Surely, Mr. Welthammer," cried the lawyer, "surely you will return with me to Linkport, Indiana, a fair city, sir, fair; to your ancestral acres beside the River Wabash. As your attorney at law I urge this course upon you. Reflect, young sir. The sunlight of that public approbation which ever shines upon a conjunction of youth and wealth—some beautiful girl, love, marriage, a happy home, flower-like children—"

"Nix, Potts, nix," said the youth roughly. "No wedding bells for mine."

"And my time's val'able," remarked Mr. Halevy, who paced the floor nervously.

Mr. Potts drew forth the gaudy handkerchief and wiped away a tear. "Your hand, my dear young friend," he muttered, brokenly. "I grieve, Linkport mourns. Farewell, young sir, farewell," and wringing his client's hand he turned away to hide his sorrow.

Mr. Halevy and the heir eyed each other questioningly an instant, then passed silently out of the room and from the hotel, and with furtive glances hurried toward the unusual drug store. Arrived in the dusty back room, Mr. Halevy was his own man again. "Now, Hedgewood," he began—

"Edgewood, pal, if you don't mind."

"Well, Edgewood, then," he continued, "my time's val'able. Hand over my half of them notes."

Mr. Edgewood pondered a moment, then slowly counted out twenty-five of the bills. "See here, Halevy," he said, "you know if I go sportin' around this man's town with a pocket full of century notes, somebody will think I've robbed

a bank; and if I get pinched it's all off with Uncle Shylock and little Willie. You've got to change this for me."

Mr. Halevy considered the situation thoughtfully. "Well," he admitted, "mebbe you're right. We don't want any pinches."

Going to the vault, he scraped together twenty-five hundred dollars in small currency and gold and exchanged with his youthful partner. Mr. Edgewood hastily filled all his pockets and stepped to the side door. "Bye-bye, uncle," he whispered. "Don't take any woolen nickels," and disappeared.

The following morning about eleven o'clock, a short, fat man, bald and hatless, breezed into the Hotel Royal like a miniature cyclone and rushed up to the clerk. In one pudgy hand he waved violently a banknote and with the other tore madly at his collar.

The clerk leaned forward urbanely, and, in accordance with lifelong habit, relieved his visitor of the money. It purported to be a hundred-dollar bill, but across its face in large red letters had been stamped by some bank the word "Counterfeit," and sorrowfully he handed it back.

"Potts," gurgled the short, fat man, "where's Potts?"

The clerk ran a ladylike finger down the register, then explained sympathetically that Mr. Potts, accompanied by a young man with blue eyes, light hair, large ears and a Roman nose, had departed hurriedly the evening before for that mysterious locality commonly described as parts unknown.

The short, fat man thrust the bill into a pocket where reposed its forty-nine brothers, and turned sadly away. Like a veritable magnate of (let us say) oil or meat, he had contributed a large sum, relatively speaking, to the cause of education—self-education; and again, like his more famous colleagues upon the higher planes of finance, he immediately advanced the margin of profit. Kerosene, sirloins or salary loans, it soon comes back.

THIRTY SECONDS OF DARKNESS

By HARRY STEPHEN KEELER

O-MORROW evening, my dear T. B.," DeLancey suddenly remarked, "I intend to be the cause of a little excitement at old Garrard Bascom's dinner party. In simple language, my dear fellow, I propose to steal the Countess of Cordova's $100,000 diamond necklace. What do you think of the project?"

With surprise I stiffened in my chair. My newspaper dropped from my fingers and I stared unbelievingly at the immaculately-clad figure that was seated across from me. But his pair of brown eyes returned my gaze unflinchingly.

"Do you mean to assert, DeLancey," I managed finally to ask, "that you intend to try such a feat as that at a dinner table surrounded by thirty or more people—and the usual two or three Pinkerton detectives present?"

"Precisely. I've had the thing in my mind ever since our invitations arrived. But, my dear fellow, you haven't yet given me your opinion."

"I think you are bereft of your senses. The chances that you take will land us both in a state penitentiary one of these days, if not in some European rat-infested dungeon."

But DeLancey only smiled more enigmatically, and commenced smoothing back the black hair that was turning slightly gray at his temples.

I confess that I invariably slumped into a feeling of profound dismay whenever DeLancey proposed to perform one of his apparently-impossible exploits. Yet, time and again, he had achieved the seemingly unachievable—and I had been able to go my way rejoicing, knowing that liberty was to be ours for a while longer. But always, down in my heart, the dread feeling existed that sooner or later was to come the one mistake, the one misstep in DeLancey's almost perfect plans, that would carry us both inside the dull, gray walls for many years.

Across Europe we had gone, DeLancey leaving in his wake a series of mystifying thefts—thefts that to this day are riddles to the Continental police. Petrograd, Berlin, Rome, Madrid, Paris, London, even New York, had contributed their toll to the man's super-cunning brain and his magnetic personality. So for the last few months, while we were living in our Chicago bachelor apartment, I felt that we were assuredly to refrain from any more of these feats—at least for an appreciable time to come. It seemed to me that in justice to ourselves, to the pleasure that we took in each other's company, to the joy of existence itself, we should continue to live quietly on the proceeds of DeLancey's last feat—the theft of Castor and Pollux, the famous red and green twin diamonds, from the vault of Simon et Cie in the Rue Royale, Paris. Success had crowned that performance, I had good reason to know, for it was into my hands that DeLancey had sent the stones in the custody of Von Berghem. And Von Berghem, traveling as an invalid in company with his small son from Paris to Calais, from Calais to Dover, from Dover to Liverpool, from Liverpool to

New York, suspected finally of having had something to do with that inexplicable crime, arrested at the docks in New York and searched for three long hours, had come through unscathed, not an inspector nor a police officer discovering that he was blind and that the diamonds were concealed behind his spectacles—concealed back of his hollow glass eyes themselves.

True, that particular success had been due in a great measure to the skill and cunning of Von Berghem himself, yet it was DeLancey's genius that had first seen the possibilities that lay in the blind beggar whom he had found wandering in the Montmarte cemetery.

I pulled myself together with a start and turned to DeLancey, watching the inscrutable smile that still lingered on his face.

"Are you able to tell me, DeLancey, just how you expect to remove a $100,000 necklace at old Bascom's dinner table under the glare of that big electric chandelier? What do you intend to do if he orders a search? Who is the Countess of Cordova, and how do you know she's going to be there? How do you know this necklace is to be around her neck? What part am I to play in the affair? How—"

"Enough, T. B.," he chuckled. "Stop your restless pacing back and forth. If you'll sit down I'll answer your questions one at a time."

I dropped back on the edge of my chair and waited to hear what he had to say.

"Now," he began slowly, "it is only fair to tell you, my dear fellow, that our exchequer is low—extremely so. The amount paid over to us by old Moses Stein for Castor and Pollux a year and a half ago—was hopelessly out of proportion to the value of those two stones." He shrugged his shoulders and frowned for the first time. "But that, T. B., is the unfortunate part of this exciting game of ours. The legitimate profits are cut to a half—to a third—even to a fourth.

"And so," he went on, "the time has come for one last coup—one big coup; and then, lad, South Australia for you and me. What do you say?"

"Anything," I replied fervently, "is preferable to this continual living in fear of a slip-up of your plans. I like you, DeLancey, and I can't endure the thought of—" I stopped, for a picture of DeLancey being dragged away to suffer the ignoble fate of a prison sentence began to swim before my eyes.

"No doubt you do," he returned, after a pause. "But, nevertheless, the fact remains that our scale of living, the exorbitant rent of this apartment, our club dues, theatres, bachelor dinners, taxicabs, the gifts to that little dark-eyed love of yours, have all helped to consume our capital far too swiftly. But I don't regret it, T. B., for it has been capital well invested, since it has secured us two invitations already to Garrard Bascom's home in Rogers Park."

"I'm inclined to credit that to your strange, winning personality."

"Personality, bah!" he snorted. "We've put up a bluff—we've jingled the money—we've belonged to the best clubs in the city; and those are the stunts that have made us welcome in such circles. But to-morrow night," he added savagely, "we'll try to reap the profits."

He paused a moment, and the smile that had so suddenly left his face slowly reappeared. For DeLancey was always genial, always in good humor, seldom ruffled.

"So as I said before," he went on, "it is up to us to make what you native-born Americans—you real Yankees—call a killing. But it must be a decent killing, lad, such as the Cordova necklace, for after that episode the name of DeLancey will always be looked upon with a very slight—perhaps an appreciable—degree of suspicion and distrust. But I'll explain.

"Among several questions, you asked me how I know that this Countess of Cordova is to be present at old Bascom's dinner to-morrow evening. That, T. B., is simplicity itself. The countess, before she married old Count Cordova of Madrid, was Amelie Bascom of Chicago. And her arrival in this city was chronicled in the *Tribune* four days ago. Quite elemental reasoning, is it not?

"Have I never told you, my dear fellow, that I met the countess when you and I were in Madrid a year and a half ago?—that the good lady, married to that old crustacean, was not at all averse to a violent flirtation?—that, if I may be pardoned for any seeming egotism in the statement, I made quite an impression on her?"

I nodded, for now I dimly remembered having heard him mention something about the matter at some obscure time in the past.

"Now," he continued, "when she glances over her estimable papa's list of guests invited to that dinner party, you may rest assured that she is going to arrange to have—er—DeLancey for a partner. Have I made this quite plain?"

"You have. You seem to have a genius for paving your way—months and years ahead."

"Specialization in crime, T. B., merely specialization such as characterizes success in any line of endeavor. But enough of that. I'll now step to another one of your questions: How do I expect to remove a $100,000 necklace at a dinner table under the glare of a huge electric chandelier?"

"Yes. How—"

"By the use of a tiny pair of well-sharpened manicure scissors, which, replaced in their black leather case, will be tossed clear across the room and remain unnoticed till the servants are cleaning up the dining room several hours afterward."

"But you haven't answer—"

He raised his hand. "Of course I haven't answered your question. It happens that I'm not going to perform that simple operation in the glare of any hanging electric lights. I have sent in an order for thirty seconds of darkness."

"Thirty seconds of darkness!"

"Exactly. You remember Tzhorka?"

I surely did. Tzhorka was the little dwarfed Russian electrician whom DeLancey had met in the great world of crookdom. On more than one occasion the latter had vaguely hinted to me that Tzhorka had worked with him once before. And this instance, I felt certain, was the night that old Count Ivan Yarosloff's safe in his palace on the Nevski-Prospect at St. Petersburg, was burned open by a pair of carbon electrodes and several thousand amperes of current stolen from the lighting feeders that led to the Russian Admiralty Building at the farther end of the Nevski-Prospect. So since I, no doubt, had helped to spend part of old Yarosloff's 83,000 missing rubles, I became interested at once.

"Yes," he said, "Tzhorka has been in Chicago for some time on plans of his own. And he has agreed to supply me with thirty seconds of darkness at any time I shall indicate."

My face must have shown my bewilderment, for DeLancey hastened to explain his statement.

"Did you notice, the last time we were at the Bascom mansion, how the house was lighted?"

I shook my head.

"Which goes to show, T. B.. that your faculties need considerable sharpening before you can stand alone on your legs in this game. If you had taken cognizance of this fact, however, you would have discovered that the current which lights up the mansion and outlying buildings at the center of that great estate is brought over the ground from the Commonwealth Edison Company's feeders which skirt the eastern edge of the property. And in saying that it is

brought over the ground, I am referring, of course, to the line of poles which carry two thick cables tapped on the Commonwealth Edison's feeders."

This time I nodded, for I was dimly beginning to comprehend that DeLancey, through the help of Tzhorka, contemplated tampering with this pair of suspended cables, thus interfering with the light supply of the Bascom residence.

"Late last night," DeLancey went on, "Tzhorka, dressed in a complete lineman's outfit, went up the pole that stands on the outer edge of the Bascom estate and spliced on to one of these cables a so-called single pole, single throw switch with carbon contacts. Then, after lashing the inner span to the cross-arm by means of a small block-and-tackle and what he terms a come-along, Tzhorka cut the cable completely through with a hacksaw. The whole arrangement, quite inconspicuous in itself, is in addition hidden by the foliage of a nearby tree."

"Then the current that feeds the Bascom estate," I exclaimed triumphantly, "is now passing through this switch. But how—"

"Yes. And if you had used those latent—nay, dormant—faculties of observation that are in you, you would have noticed also that the great French latticed windows of the Bascom dining room are in direct line with that outermost pole. In other words, if Tzhorka should be astride that cross-arm in the darkness to-morrow night, watching our dinner table intently through a pair of high-power field glasses, and he should see—er—a certain individual, myself, for instance, raise his hand to his head and pat down his hair, say, twice in succession, he might easily slip on a pair of blue goggles and pull the handle of that switch. The house, stables, garage, kitchens, and everything, would be without electric light instantly, until such time that—"

"For thirty seconds—"

"After which," DeLancey concluded, "Tzhorka, consulting the second hand of his watch, would throw back the switch. Then the lights would go on and—"

"You idiot, you rash, foolhardy numbskull," I raged, rising up from my chair in my agitation, "a search would be immediately ordered by Bascom when anywhere from one to twenty-nine of those guests, not counting the countess herself, discovers that this necklace that adorns her neck is missing. You can't—"

"Which brings us face to face with another one of your questions, T. B. What can I do if one or two of those guests prove to be the usual Pinkertons and lock the doors in order to make a thorough search? A neat problem, isn't it?"

"Far, far too neat," I replied bitterly. "DeLancey, get this project out of your mind. You can't do it, I tell you. If you kept the necklace on your person—they would get it sure. And even if you were able to hide it some place during the thirty seconds that Tzhorka, five hundreds yards away, holds open the switch, everyone would be watched so closely that you would not dare to regain it." I stopped, disheartened. "And what part am I to play in this affair?"

"Nothing, this time, lad. All that you need to do in the darkness is to draw back your chair and rise, as no doubt some of the men and most of the ladies will. You might rattle a dish or two, if one is handy. Just add to the general confusion, for beyond that I have no definite part for you to play."

I leaned forward and placed my hand on DeLancey's shoulder. "DeLancey, give up this mad idea. I tell you the thing is impossible. Your arrangements are characteristic of the thoroughness that always surrounds your work, and to a certain degree admirable. But I tell you frankly this particular feat cannot be accomplished. It cannot." I leaned forward still farther. "Listen to me, old man. Give it up. Why must you take these chances? Why—"

"Enough, T. B.," he calmy interrupted me. "I've been planning this thing for several days. When I first studied that Cordova necklace in Madrid, just after the old count parted with it for a wedding gift, I felt a strange desire—almost a hope—that I might place my fingers on it within another ten years. I tell you I counted every stone; I feasted my eyes on their pureness, their scintillation, their unusual brilliancy. I studied even the clasp, so obsessed did I become with the thing and the different possibilities for removing it. Not content with that, I looked up the records and valuation of the necklace in the Spanish Royal Archives of the Library Madrid. And then and there I determined that the Cordova line — money lenders, interest sharks, blood suckers as they had been for the past five generations—should pay toll at least to the thousandth part of what they themselves have stolen."

I knew that DeLancey's decision was final, for there, in his last statement, was his whole philosophy of theft summed up. Never yet had I known him to lay a finger on the property of anyone except those scattered individuals who had amassed their wealth by extortion and trickery. So I saw full well that all the arguments would be useless now.

I made no more attempts at dissuading him from his purpose. Instead, I tried with all my ability to induce him to tell me just what method he expected to follow in order to leave Bascom's house with this $100,000 necklace in his possession. Did he intend, perhaps, to toss it from the French window? No, he claimed, for the coolness of the late fall weather was too great to count on the possibility of those windows being open. More than that he refused to say. And yet it seemed that some scheme, some rational, logical procedure, was mapped out in his brain, if he had gone to the trouble of securing Tzhorka's services in tampering with the electric cables that fed the Bascom estate.

After a quarter of an hour of vain questioning, I gave it up, for he proved adamantine this time in his resolve not to allow me to enter his plans. He persisted in arguing that, since I could be of no assistance whatever in this instance, it was best that I remain in total ignorance of what was to take place. And finally he seized his silk hat and ordered me to drop the whole subject and come for a stroll along Michigan Boulevard.

I confess that I did not sleep very well that night, for something seemed to tell me that the following evening was to end disastrously for DeLancey. But as I slipped into a bathrobe in the morning, I met DeLancey himself, emerging from his cold plunge, pink-cheeked, smiling, totally lacking the slightest shadow under his eyes. Truly, it seemed as though there was nothing in the world that could disturb the man's equanimity.

After finishing the breakfast that was brought up to our suite, DeLancey donned his cape, took up his hat and walking stick, and pressed the button that summoned a taxicab.

"Now, my dear fellow," he said, "I may be away all day to-day, as I have been during the past two days. Can you exist without me?"

"I thought that perhaps we should have this last day together—a trip to the country, for instance. But here you go off again—on that mysterious business that's been keeping you for two days now. If something unusual should develop, where could I find you?"

He wrinkled up his brows. "Well—I may as well tell you that my whereabouts are uncertain. But for the present I'm off to old Moses Stein's shop on Halsted Street, ostensibly to make a purchase, but in reality to conclude the details for disposing of this necklace before we leave for Australia."

"Old Stein, the jewel shark? The fence?"

"Yes."

"Then you're still quite confident that you are to have everything your own way in stealing that necklace?—that you can deliberately walk out of the house with it?—that you will not make a single mistake?"

"Not absolutely confident," he said simply. "But old Stein knows that necklace as he knows pretty nearly everything of value in the world of jewels, and he has agreed to pay over sixty per cent. of the intrinsic value of those stones. And I, in turn, have agreed to place it in his hands by midnight to-night. So you see, T. B., there is no recrossing of the Rubicon." He paused a moment. "I may be gone the greater part of the day. Since we dare not employ a valet, you might, if you will, lay out my evening clothes, studs, and gloves at six o'clock to-night—and order the taxicab for seven-thirty. The dinner is scheduled for nine, and we must allow at least an hour and a half to reach Rogers Park."

And without even allowing me to put forth one last argument, he slipped from our apartment. A second later I heard the clang of the descending elevator in the outer hallway.

That day was surely an unpleasant one for me. It seemed as though the fear of a slip-up haunted me this time far more than it had in all DeLancey's previous affairs in which I had participated. I tried to read, but my attention failed utterly to stay with the printed page. I tried to smoke, but invariably my cigar grew cold in my fingers while I became lost in my own abstractions.

What plans DeLancey had contrived I could not imagine. Why had he been so rash as to take the old jewel fence, Moses Stein, into his confidence on the subject of the Cordova necklace? Yet I knew, too, that on more than one occasion DeLancey had consulted with the old man on various jobs. One thing, at least, was certain. In dealing with old Stein he was dealing with an individual who knew the exact value and description of every piece of jewelry in the world of any historical value. In fact, it was Stein who had outbid Ranseer, the mad gem collector, for possession of Castor and Pollux, a year or more before, and that without ever having seen the stones, so well did he know their size, color, shape, cutting, and purity. So, no doubt, he knew the Cordova necklace as well, if he had agreed on a finite sum to be paid over for it.

The day dragged by interminably.

I spent the afternoon walking along Michigan Boulevard and returning to the apartment at intervals of an hour, feverishly looking for DeLancey to put in an appearance. Came two o'clock, three o'clock, four o'clock. At five o'clock the afternoon light faded. As darkness came on, I laid out his evening clothes and his studs. Then I ordered the taxicab for seven-thirty. And when this was done, I heard six o'clock tinkle from the tiny onyx clock on our mantel.

What in heaven's name, I wondered vaguely, could be keeping him? Mysterious as his movements had been in the last two days, he had not yet remained away so late as this. Where had he gone after leaving Moses Stein's? Or was he still lolling in the old man's Halsted Street shop?

Came six-thirty o'clock — and DeLancey!

He bustled into the apartment and quickly locked the door behind him. I was making a poor attempt at dressing for the Bascom dinner. He glanced hurriedly at his watch and slipped into his own bedroom without a word, where I heard him splashing about in his tub a few moments later.

But just as I looked from the boulevard window at seven-thirty and saw the lights of our taxicab as it drew up to the curbing far down in the darkness below, he emerged from his room, dressed in his immaculate evening clothes, debonair

as ever, smiling as though the fortunes of the night meant nothing to him, one way or the other.

We descended to the taxicab and started out on the long journey to Rogers Park. DeLancey persisted, however, in chatting about a host of trivial subjects, the very discussion of which required all my self-restraint and composure. But when I touched ever so lightly on the subject of the Cordova necklace, he frowned and quickly changed the subject.

It was a quarter to nine when we rolled up Sheridan Road and turned in between the two great ornamental iron fence posts that marked the entrance to the Bascom grounds. A short drive farther over a gravel road between two tall blackthorn hedges brought us to a grating stop at the steps of the mansion itself. A second later an obsequious footman was opening the door of the cab.

So now the die was cast, for no more that evening—perhaps forever—could I have even a single secret word with DeLancey.

As I mingled with the guests in the drawing room, I tried my best to appear composed and completely at ease. Old Garrard Bascom passed from group to group, and shortly catching sight of me, standing alone and forlorn, introduced me to a pretty debutante who was to be my partner at the table. And I confess that my conversation held forth little promise of an entertaining evening for her, for my attention persisted in straying around the great room, from one individual to another.

Jewels there were a-plenty. They flashed from the ear lobes of most of the women, and from the shirt bosoms of some of the men. Here and there a pearl necklace could be seen, and once I caught sight of a flashing diamond stomacher adorning the person of a huge, powdered, beruffled dowager. The Cordova necklace, however, was the one object which I seemed unable to locate.

But suddenly I caught sight of both it and its owner—and DeLancey as well, seated on a divan which was almost concealed from my view by a huge fern. Truly, there could be no doubt that the rather faded woman who sat looking up at DeLancey was the Countess of Cordova, for when she tossed her head coquettishly at his no doubt complimentary sallies, the sinuous coil around her white throat seemed to emit a veritable stream of colored fire. As for him, however, he seemed quite oblivious to it. All preliminaries, though, must come to an end. Yet, when the butler appeared in the wide doorway and announced dinner, my heart persisted in giving a strange leap. But I gave my arm to my partner and followed the guests to the dining-room.

Matters there were just as DeLancey had stated they would be. The French latticed windows were tightly shut. Plainly, then, he must carry the Cordova necklace out of the house himself if it were to be carried away at all. As I dropped into my chair I could see far, far off through the window, the twinkling lights of a passing automobile on Sheridan Road, and I found myself wondering what thoughts were running through Tzhorka's head as he crouched on the wooden cross-arm at the outermost edge of the estate and surveyed this laughing, chatting assemblage through the field glasses that DeLancey had mentioned.

As chance would have it, I found myself seated directly across from DeLancey and the countess. Several times during the first few moments I tried to catch his eye, but his whole attention seemed to be concentrated on arousing the inherent vanity of the woman who sat at his side. And since I could not hear a word of what he was saying, so great was the babble of conversation and the chink of glasses, I determined to conceal my nervousness to the best of my ability and to pay more attention to my partner.

Course after course proceeded with

clockwork regularity. That the preliminary cocktails had mounted to the heads of some of the younger members was plain, for their laughter grew stronger and more strident. Old Bascom, from his position at the head of the table, beamed in turn on everyone, and the servants passed mechanically and noiselessly from chair to chair. And as nothing happened, I commenced wondering whether DeLancey had changed his plans at the last moment.

My gaze kept up a rather rapid circuit from the chattering young woman at my side, to the top of DeLancey's smoothly brushed black hair, to the string of sparkling brilliants around the countess's neck, to two of the guests who sat at the very end of the long table. Somehow I felt instinctively that they were not of the same world as the rest of those people, for the man's jaws were too strong, and his close-cropped mustache seemed to proclaim the plain-clothes man to such an extent that his perfect evening dress was considerably out of keeping with the rest of him. As for the young woman at his side, she had too much of an alert, businesslike air about her, and a complexion that showed too well the absence of the trained masseur—and the French maid.

Yet nothing happened.

The last course was brought to the table, and a few moments later its empty dishes were removed. Then the tinkling glasses of iced creme de menthe were carried in and distributed. And just as I had concluded with a sigh of relief that DeLancey had given up his scheme, he performed precisely the gesture that I had been seeing in my mind's eye for the past twenty-four hours.

He raised his right hand carelessly to the top of his head and patted his hair twice.

Almost automatically I turned my own head and gazed in the direction of the latticed window—only far out and beyond, into the darkness. It seemed that several long seconds elapsed. But when I detected a bright point of light breaking into being a quarter mile distant, I knew that Tzhorka was playing his part. Almost on the heels of this momentary flash, the lights on the great chandelier above the table, as well as the tiny frosted bulbs along the fresco work on the walls, dimmed—and went completely dark.

In the profound blackness that ensued, only an intense stillness, the stillness of utter surprise, followed. Then came a chorus of exclamations, which, with a ripple of laughter, served to break the silence. On top of this, a number of chairs were drawn hastily back from the table, and I heard a rumble of anger coming from the direction of old Bascom's place.

At this juncture, a succession of peculiar, almost indistinguishable, sounds struck my ear, for I, of all that assemblage, was expecting them. I heard a slight snip, then a sharp sound as though some light object had struck the opposite wall of the room. Following this came the faintest suggestion of a metallic tinkle. But on top of that a woman's alarming scream sounded forth: "My necklace—"

Almost instantly, it seemed, a match was struck on the under side of a chair, and as it flared up I saw with surprise that it was in DeLancey's hand, and that he was standing erect, looking dumbfoundly down at the countess.

"Get matches — or lights — or something, some of you men," he commanded sharply. "The countess has fainted—and her necklace is gone from her throat. Bascom, lock the doors. Don't let a man—"

But his words were interrupted by the instantaneous bursting into radiance of the great chandelier above the table.

The thirty seconds were over.

And it was just as DeLancey had cleverly announced, for, as far as I could see, he had deliberately drawn suspicion

to himself in order to bolster up his own unpleasant position. The countess sat slumped up in her chair, in a dead faint. DeLancey stood above her, still holding the blackened match stub. And every guest, without exception, was staring open-mouthed at her white throat, now utterly devoid of a single diamond.

This last tableau lasted for only an instant. Then the man with the close-cropped mustache, whom I had suspected all along of being an employee of the Pinkerton system, crossed the floor rapidly and planted his back to the door, at the same time throwing back his coat and displaying a shining steel badge. Almost as quickly, a young society man next to him crossed to the French latticed window and took up a position there.

Now we were in for it. Fool, fool, fool of a DeLancey, I reflected bitterly.

Old Bascom, who had been standing bewildered at the head of the table, looking stupidly from his daughter's crumpled-up form to the man posted at the door, ejaculated:

"God bless my soul, O'Rourke, what's the matter? What—"

"There's been crooked work pulled off here, Mr. Bascom," retorted that individual quickly: "Can't you see that your daughter's necklace is gone?" He turned to the group around the table. "Two of you ladies help to bring the countess out of her faint. Some of you men look under her chair. If that necklace isn't found, you'll have to step in the next room one by one and be searched." He looked down the table to the young woman who had been his partner. "Miss Kelly, I'll detail you to search the ladies if the necklace isn't on the floor."

A chorus of indignant protests arose from the ladies. The men gasped and looked from one to the other with manifest suspicion written on their faces. A number of the guests stared at DeLancey, who still stood where he was, passing his hand over his brow.

"I feel," he stammered feebly, "that this puts me in a rather peculiar light. If—if there's to be any search made, I suggest that it be made on me first. I—"

But he was interrupted by one of the male guests who pointed down the table and exclaimed: "The countess's glass of cr—"

That gentleman, however, had no opportunity to finish his statement, for the female detective suddenly broke in:

"Look, ladies and gentlemen." She, too, pointed at the countess's untouched glass of creme de menthe. "The lady's glass of cordial is the only one on the table that's been spilled all over the cloth. It might be that—"

"God bless my soul," said old Bascom again, still trying to collect his wits, "what are you all driving at?"

I lost no time in staring at the point which Miss Kelly was indicating, and I saw what she was trying to call everyone's attention to. Just as she had announced, the green cordial in the counes's glass had slopped down the sides of the fragile vessel and had made a great sticky stain around the base. And I daresay that everyone else saw it at the same time. Miss Kelly, however, hurriedly crossed around the end of the long table and hooked a businesslike finger to the bottom of the glass. A fraction of a second later I found myself picturing DeLancey's inward rage when he saw that he had been outwitted by a woman.

For as she raised her hand, something was hanging from the crook of her finger; something that might once have held all the colors of the rainbow, but which now, covered as it was with sticky green syrup, hanging pendent with the clasp opened, covered from one end to the other with creme de menthe, dripping green drops that seemed like emeralds being born from more emeralds, showed plainly where the Cordova lacklace had gone. With no regard for the white table cloth, she held it up so that everyone could see.

"The necklace," she stated slowly and triumphantly, "has not been stolen." She looked toward Bascom. An apology is due your guests, Mr. Bascom."

"God bless my—" he started to say faintly for the third time. But suddenly he seemed to collect his senses. He snatched up a napkin and, unfolding it leaned over and held it under Miss Kelly's outstretched hand. Without a word she dropped the necklace into it, and he hurriedly folded it up and placed it safely in his breast pocket. Then he turned to the stupified butler.

"Harkins, get the countess's maid and help her to her room." He then glanced angrily at O'Rourke. "O'Rourke, you've made a nasty mistake." He looked at the rest of the assemblage. "I trust, ladies and gentlemen, that you will pardon this affront to your honesty here to-night. This is surely a deplorable happening. Something seemed to have interrupted the city current supply, and in the excitement my daughter must have leaned over, with the result that the clasp of her necklace loosened and it dropped into her glass of cordial. I humbly ask the pardon of one and all of you for the whole occurrence."

With the sudden entrance of the countess's maid, the guests quickly adjourned to the drawing-room, the gentlemen, apparently by mutual understanding, giving up the usual coffee and cigars. On the way out of the dining room I caught sight of DeLancey, and his face appeared as black as a thundercloud. Perhaps the abrupt disclosure that Pinkerton employees were at the table, or else their crude methods in handling the situation aroused some ire among the ladies, for cabs were called for shortly and one by one the guests departed.

With DeLancey I climbed into our vehicle, but nothing was said by either of us until we were rolling out of the Bascom grounds and down Sheridan Road.

"Well?"

"Well, I consider that you were mighty lucky to escape with your liberty. Your deal proved a fiasco—just as I felt it would all the time. In fact, you might just as well have taken a megaphone and called the attention of the whole company to the countess's creme de menthe glass, for the stuff was slopped all over the cloth. But one thing I'd like to ask, DeLancey. Did you honestly intend to drop the necklace into the cordial glass—or was that an accident?"

He spoke fully for the first time since leaving the Bascom estate.

"My dear T. B.," he said slowly, "how very, very obtuse you are. Is it possible that you don't yet know that the necklace which was fished from the countess's creme de menthe glass, and held up dripping and covered with the green syrup for everyone to see, was a paste duplicate that was put together by old Stein and myself in the last three days? Is it—"

But there was no need of his explaining further, for as we passed an arc-lamp and its rays flashed into the carriage, I saw something gleaming and sparkling in the palm of his hand—something that seemed to hold in leash the colors of a thousand rainbows.

Now they're making brandy from bananas. If a banana doesn't flop you one way it will another.—*Wex Jones.*

ARGUING FOR NEW YORK

By HOMER CROY

"THEY may not have as many shootin's, Black Handin's, millionaires marrying milliners, bombs, bums and boodle, and the buildings may be stretched a few stories by the time they get here, and the girls in the music shows may not kick half as high as we hear it up here," effused Bill Withers, propping his elbow on a laprobe in his livery barn at Hallsville and fingering in his paper-lined sack, "but notwithstanding, nevertheless, and to the contrary, New York has got it on Hallsville in more ways than once. Comin' directly to the point, without circumlocutin', wastin' wanton words, beatin' around the sumac, or bringin' coals to New Castle after they've put in steam heat—there's Uncle Ase."

So we nodded polite and crossed our legs.

"As you don't know, Uncle Ase used to run the feed-yard here and was always chairman of the Fourth of July celebration and could mop his brow with his handkerchief and at the same time say 'the irate and irascible British lion!' Well, Uncle Ase was the poker prank of this neck of the Pinchot controversy. He was the handiest man with cards I ever see. He could do all of them vanishing tricks where now-you-see-it-now-yon-don't and be wondering if Battling Nelson took part in the Boxer Rebellion. Before wastin' my time playin' poker with him I would jes' give him all my money and personal belongings and borrow my watch back.

"Sometimes a traveling man or an actor or some other foreigner would drift into Hallsville and mildly mention as they would like to while away the time with a sociable game of draw poker. I used to look at them and wonder if they had a fam'ly. It would take a lot of urgin' to get Uncle Ase to set in, but jes' to entertain the visitors he would finally give in and take a hand with an expression on his face that looked as if it had been taken from the frontispiece of 'Mother, Home and Heaven.' He would toy along with the visitors, them lettin' him win the first three or four hands to get him feelin' confident, and then they would kind of clear their throats as if to say, 'It's time now for us to bring in the sheaves.' But Uncle Ase was Maud Muller with a patent self-dumping and windrowin' rake and continued to make hay with the same innocent, confidin' expression on his face, childishly surprised and pleased each time the chips came over to his corner. Right in the middle of a game he would stop and ask some technical point as if garnering up a bit of useful information. Then he'd make them say it was beginner's luck. When the traveling man suddenly found he'd have to catch a train and the actor remembered the important letter he had to get off, Uncle Ase would offer to give them back their money, which of course they wouldn't accept, thus makin' sure of them the next time they come to town.

"So wings begun to sprout on Uncle Ase's shoulders. He stood up on the Himalaya of Hallsville, shaded his eyes with his hand and looked for other worlds to conquer. Then one day he

come to me and says, 'Bill, I've found an unconquered geographical area — Van Demon's Land.'

" 'New York?' I asks.

" 'The same,' he says. 'I believe I'll go down there and stock up with gold bricks. Don't you want a share?'

"So I put in fifty and Gus Gribble comes across with another fifty, and Uncle Ase puts on a black hat without a crease and takes a black canvas round-shouldered grip with a tin handle that rattled when you set it down, and goes to New York.

"The first one gets him in New Jersey at their seaport town—oh, yes, Hoboken—and before he had got to the Astor House they looked like a Mormon convention. Uncle Ase explained gently to them that he was very busy and had to see the Statue of Liberty and the Natural Museum of Arts before any social pleasures. The convention said they'd been appointed by the mayor to show him a good time and called a taxicab. They wore out two taxicabs and finally chartered a sight-seeing car.

"Uncle Ase said he'd pay for everything, and every time he drew out his log of greenbacks the bodyguard would wiggle their fingers and water around the eyes, but they'd push it back in his inside pocket and toss some bills to the waiter and chauffeurs careless like, as if money irritated their fingers.

"That night, after they had left the show, where they set between the elbow of the first violinist and the toes of the prima donna wearing tights half one color and half something else, one of the men says, 'Wouldn't you like to come up to our club for a social chat?'

" 'Ain't it gettin' kinder late?' Asks Uncle Ase, having a hand-to-hand with a yawn.

" 'It ain't ever late when good fellers get together,' says the man sentimental-like. 'It's so refreshin' to have an out-of-town friend here that ain't satiated with New York's round of revelry. Did you ever hear the funny story about the lady and the bathing suit? We'll call a taxi and tell it to you.'

"The club was all fixed up like a queen's boodore, with velvet chairs, gold tassels, and electric fans that would throw a zephyr in your face and disappear for half a minute, and free lunches on the arm of your chair served by a negro in a white apron and a boy's-size coat.

" 'What 'll you have?' asks one of the men in a See-America-First tone.

" 'Why, I guess I'll take a cup of cocoa,' says Uncle Ase as innocent as Mary's pet.

" 'I mean what kind of game would you like to set in?'

" 'I ain't much on anything outside of crokinole,' says Uncle Ase, 'but if you've got some poker chips that ain't in use I might try my hand.'

" 'The rules of the club is,' says the man with thin, white hands, 'that you can't buy less than fifty dollars' worth of chips. That's the reason it's so exclusive.'

"Uncle Ase turned it over a minute. 'Well,' he says, boyishly, as if afraid to back out, 'give me one set.'

"Uncle Ase picked up the cards and tried to run the deck, but spilled it and blushed in such becoming confusion that one of the men had to choke himself from saying, 'Get a basket.'

"The first hand around, Mr. Johnson took it—that's what he said it was even if sometimes the others did call him Mac—and kinder looked at Uncle Ase like as if he wondered if he had a confiding wife. Uncle Ase winced as if it was taking away his confiding wife's Sunday dress, but the next hand the chips gravitated over to Uncle Ase's corner. As the bait stacked up Uncle Ase's face began to widen till it wrinkled the back of his neck. Then one of the men winked at Mr. Johnson as if to say, 'Let's reel in and land the sucker,' and dropped their entertainin' expression. But the chips

kept comin' over and climbing up on top of each other on Uncle Ase's corner till he looked like a knight behind an embattled castle wall, or however you say it.

"Purty soon the men were jumping up and running over to the cashier for more chips; then in a few minutes the castle wall would have a pergola and a lookout on it. All night the Marathon continued, Uncle Ase cashing in now and then just to have room to be sociable.

"'Don't you feel sleepy?' asked Mr. Johnson about noon.

"'No,' says Uncle Ase, 'this coffee has got me stirred up,' and Mr. Johnson walked over to the cashier slow and halting like.

"All afternoon and until evening the castle building went on, Unce Ase gettin' to be a machine with just one motion—rakin' in.

"'Well, I'm all in,' said Mr. Johnson, slidin' down in his chair and puttin' out his legs stiff. 'It's a good thing this joint has the rule of giving you supper and a dollar when you go broke.'

"As quick as Uncle Ase had relieved the other fellow of his plethora of plush he got up and cashed in—six thousand dollars. The cashier gave it to him in six bills, and Uncle Ase stood there fumbling it kind of nervous. Never before had he ever seen that much money in one group. He run his fingers over it and touched his thumb to his lip and caressed it again. Then the responsibility of taking care of that amount of money made him trembly and he begun to think himself a lamb in the wilds of New York, and all the stories of pickpockets and thugs he had ever heard came rushin' back to him. He folded it up and stuck it in his round pocketbook with the three clasps, but he knew that he could never get back to Hallsville with it that way. He knew that the first jam he went through the wad would be gone. So he sat down in the corner and thought out how to play safe. He sent the negro out to a drugstore and tipped him till he could say 'Thank you' only once.

"Then to show the men it wouldn't be any use to set a pickpocket on his trail, he called Mr. Johnson in a bedroom. 'I want you to put this money on me,' says Uncle Ase. 'I'm beginnin' to realize I ain't fitten to take care of myself in a big city.'

"'You ain't so worse,' says Mr. Johnson quick-like.

"Uncle Ase peels off his coat and shirt, unrolls the paper and hands Mr. Johnson a porous plaster. 'Now,' says Uncle Ase, 'I want you to oblige me by stickin' these bills on my back under this plaster so I can't possibly lose them.'

"'This is one on me,' laughs Mr. Johnson at Uncle Ase's simplicity.

"'It's six on me,' comes back Uncle Ase like an actor.

"Mr. Johnston sticks them on and after Uncle Ase had got in his shirt and coat he hands him a bill that makes Mr. Johnson hold his hand tenderly. Then Uncle Ase calls a taxicab and goes to the depot.

"I gets this telegram the next morning:

"'AM COMING WITH BILLS ON.—UNCLE ASE.'

"So us men that was financially interested was down to the train to meet him, and we all rode up town in the hack, feeling as big as Chautauqua lecturers. We comes down here to this very office, and Uncle Ase, as excited as a kid, skins out of his shirt. Wet gets a sponge and some hot water and he stands it manfully. So do we."

Bill Withers stops and bites up a straw.

"Yes?" we asked with a question mark.

"Well," he said meditatively, "that's the reason I think that even if New York ain't got building's fifty stories tall and girls that can kick as high as a man can reach, it has got it on Hallsville just the same. They were one-dollar bills."

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3. Every manuscript will be judged purely on story-value, on its interest in plot and action;

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4. All envelopes containing manuscripts should be plainly marked "Prize Contest" and addressed "The Black Cat Magazine, Inc., 229 West 28th St., New York, N. Y." Their receipt will be acknowledged. Any competitor may send as many stories as he pleases, but in each case he must comply with all the above conditions.

5. Failure of any manuscript to fulfill all the above requirements will automatically eliminate it.

6. The competition will close June 30, 1920, and within sixty days of that date the awards will be announced in THE BLACK CAT and paid in cash. All stories submitted in the competition that are found to be acceptable for publication in THE BLACK CAT will be paid for at regular rates. Publication of these stories will begin as soon as possible, and all stories thus accepted will be published with the statement "Entered in THE BLACK CAT Prize Story Con-

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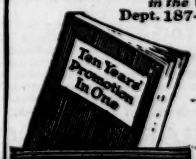

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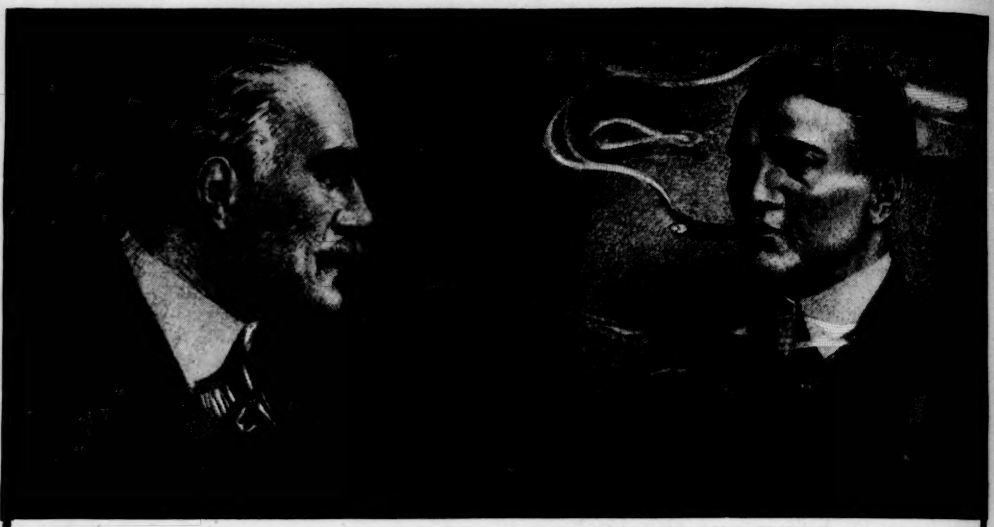

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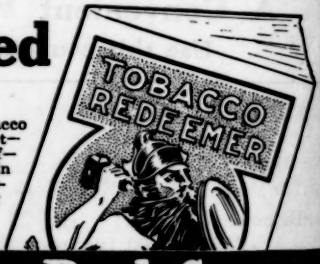

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